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Alexey Bogaturov, Alexey Dundich, Evgeniy Troitskiy

**CENTRAL ASIA:
A «DELAYED NEUTRALITY»
AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
IN THE 2000s**

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The report deals with the main trends in international relations in Central Asia in the 2000s. It traces back the emergence of a new subsystem in international politics in that part of the world against the background of major political events in the domestic life of the Central Asian countries.

The publication is intended for Russian and international specialists on Central Asia, lecturers, analysts, postgraduates, MA and university students majoring in international relations, region-specific studies, history and political science as well as all those interested in international politics and diplomacy.

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Introduction.

Central Asia In International Politics

The growing interest of superpowers in Central Asia¹ in the first decade of the 21st century signaled the return of the region into the focus of international politics. For the second time over the past hundred years and for the first time after the Russian-British delimitation at the end of the 19th century, an increased concentration of multidirectional aspirations of external players, primarily the United States of America and the European Union, was observed in that part of the world. Along with the traditional interests of Russia and China, these aspirations form a competitive regional environment where elements of cooperation and mutual support are intertwined with rivalry, misunderstanding and mutual apprehension.

The present-day Central Asia is a successor to, but not an equivalent of, Soviet Central Asia. Contemporary use of the political and geographical terminology permits to refer Kazakhstan to that region along with the former Soviet Central Asian republics (Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan). Moreover, the notion of “Central Asia” incorporates some areas in North Afghanistan and the Xinjiang-Uyghur Autonomous District (XUAR) in the People’s Republic of China. In political papers, especially those dealing with the analysis of energy aspects of the situation around the Caspian Sea, the discourse on Central Asia includes Russian territories bordering on Kazakhstan, from Astrakhan Province in the West to the Altai Territory in the East.

International and Political Environment in Central Asia

The place that the subsystem of relations between the Central Asian countries occupies in international relations is determined by its current and potential – not quite explicit –

¹ The term applies to the entire historical period under consideration although it was introduced into political use only in January 1993 under the decision of the summit held by the five Central Asian states in Tashkent. Previously, the territory was called “Central Asia and Kazakhstan”.

role in energy production and transportation. Energy resources are a blessing of Central Asia and its onus. After the breakup of the USSR, neither Russia nor Western countries were able to establish control over natural resources of the Central Asian states although they had a possibility of influencing their energy policy with regard to energy production, export and transportation. Actual possession of natural wealth, export revenues and the ability to speculate on competition between Russian and Western companies for access to energy resources provide the smaller nations with a substantial external political resource.

The states deprived of such a resource still play an important role in the region due to their spatial and geographical features permitting them to influence the security of the neighboring territories pipelines pass or will pass through. Really, in the 19th century both Western and Russian authors viewed the importance of the region in the light of geostrategy and examined it in the context of hypothetical threats to Great Britain's positions in India posed by Russia. At the start of the 21st century, approaches to the analysis of regional realities shifted towards geo-economics. The Central Asian expanse began to be perceived as an area of passage of energy-carrying arteries, and the stream of hydrocarbons they carried could be directed westwards (towards the European Union and the Atlantic), southwards (towards the Indian Ocean) and eastwards (towards China, Japan and the Pacific Ocean).

Will oil and gas from the Central Asian countries head towards the Atlantic or the Pacific? In the first half of the current century this question promises to become a number one issue in the regional politics. It is turning into a kernel of competition between potential consumers of these resources, the countries that pipelines will cross, and the states striving to influence the situation in the energy sector of the world economy at large.

Along with the pipeline diplomacy, the railroad network in that part of the world may turn out to be another geopolitical factor. In the years following the breakup of the USSR, the old Soviet railroad network has ceased to be linked solely with the European and the Siberian parts of Russia. Kazakhstan has taken the effort of completing the construction of the railroad

connecting it with the XUAR (Urumqi). Now freight, if profitable, can be delivered from Central Asia to the East not only via Russia but also via China.

In the 1990s, Turkmenistan also built a railroad section connecting the Turkmen railways with the Iranian ones (Meshed), which opened up transportation routes towards the South. After a long period of isolation from its Southern and Eastern neighbors, the region has opened up, for the first time ever having received a technical possibility of direct communication not only northwards and westwards but also southwards and eastwards. This change, however, has not yet transformed itself into a reorientation of international contacts of the Central Asian countries. But the construction of eastward and southward roads has backed the psychological prerequisites that existed in regional countries for pursuing a more multidirectional cooperation policy.

However, Central Asia's openness combined with its cross-road geographical location is not only an advantage but also a source of problems. Central Asia is the hub of the local production of narcotics (primarily in Fergana) and, to a greater extent, a major transit route for the trafficking of Afghan-made drugs, into which it has turned after the breakup of the USSR and the overthrow of the pro-Soviet government in Afghanistan. The stream of drugs partially settles in Russia and moves on to European countries.

Drug trafficking is a source of tremendous illegal income of all those involved in it. That income however is distributed unevenly. Rank-and-file traffickers often remain destitute throughout their lifetime because their earnings are consumed by numerous relatives whose living standards are extremely low. However, the lumpen stratum in drug trafficking is the most numerous and politically significant one, especially in a situation of slow expansion of citizens' rights in the process of "controlled top-bottom democratization".

Objectively, "proletarians of drug trafficking" cannot but sympathize with the drug dealers as they regard the activity their relatives and themselves are involved in as the sole source of their livelihood. At the same time, this stratum is the most explosive one. On the one hand, it interprets government

attempts at rooting out the drug dealing as an infringement on the foundations of their life sustenance. Drug dealers can easily turn the indignation of residents of drug-transit and drug-producing areas against the government and provoke something like “drug” or “color” revolutions.

On the other hand, the more educated part of the poor strata justly regards economic and social reforms as an instrument of drug control, which will permit to distract the population of “drug-prone” areas from the criminal business. Lack of such reforms gives rise to dissatisfaction of the population.

Both trends, combined with personal, political, party, clanish, regional and other legal but often “invisible” to analysts scrambles, create a complicated pattern of public and political interactions. Difficulties in internal development show up in external political processes and foreign policies. Fluctuations in relations between Uzbekistan and Tajikistan in the 1990s, mutually suspicious relations between Tajikistan and Afghanistan, chronic opposition between the authorities and organized crime in the Fergana oasis, and intermittent instability in Kyrgyzstan can hardly be analyzed separately from the conflict-laden role of drug dealing.

Control over drug transit is a source of struggle between the governments of Central Asian countries and criminal groups as well as among the groups themselves. Local extremist movements coming out under Islamist mottos have access to financial resources derived from drug trafficking and act as semi-legal agents of drug-traffickers in government bodies. The drug-dealing factor and the attempts of local criminal groups to place power in the Central Asian countries into the hands of their protégés constitute the most important elements of the local political, socioeconomic and ideological landscape.

Finally, a very important feature of the regional environment is inseparability of political problems in Central Asia from the security issues of the neighboring countries – Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran. The idea of inseparability of security in relation to the European and Atlantic region was a fruit of analytics of the 1950s. In that part of the world, inseparability implied the unity of security of the USA, Britain and France in their opposition to the Soviet Union.

In Central Asia inseparability looks different. It is not embodied in international political instruments or leaders' statements. It is rooted in the geographical realities instead of cultures and values. Due to relief peculiarities (such as inaccessible mountains and deserts) as well as distribution of water resources and ethnic settlement depending on it, *political boundaries in Central Asia and the Middle East do not coincide with the outline of political and geographical interests of security of various nations.*

In the Fergana oasis, on the Tajik-Afghan border and in localities inhabited by Pashto tribes in the borderline area between Afghanistan and Pakistan it is impossible to delimit the interests of the neighboring countries. They merge into a single complex, and their solution excludes a possibility of drafting and implementing legally explicit agreements because they cannot practically take into consideration the entire complexity of the existing relations between the ethnic groups and the State in the areas where their interests are intertwined. Relations between the Central Asian countries therefore have a propensity for more dynamic forms of stability, in contrast to static, legally formalized and controlled international relations in Europe.

Regional Political and Psychological Background

Apparently, such a version of “inseparability of security” is rooted in the traditional mentality of people living in that part of the world. The so-called “oasis mentality” based on self-identification not only and sometimes not as much with their own ethnic group as with the habitation territory is typical of its Southern ethnic groups (Uzbeks, Tajiks, Kyrgyzs and Turkmens). Historically, people used to settle near water. It was scarce in that region of deserts and mountains, and possibilities of moving to another place of residence were limited. Oasis inhabitants unwittingly cultivated tolerance to alien ethnicity. The ruler of an oasis could belong to a different ethnic group but if he did not deprive others of access to water and, therefore, life he could be tolerated even if he was of “alien” blood, language and culture. Islam, whose supra-ethnic solidarity doc-

trine laid emphasis on common values rather than on ethnic differences, could play a conciliatory role in such cases as well.

Prior to its inclusion into the Soviet Union followed by the ethno-territorial delimitation within its boundaries, the population of Central Asia had had no notion of the “national statehood” in its European sense. The prevailing forms of organization were territorial and political entities based on the supra-ethnic principle, which was, in its essence, the imperial principle. From the viewpoint of the European science of the 20th century, the Bukhara and the Kabul (Afghan) Emirates as well as the Khiva and the Kokand Khanates were typologically relatively small *oasis empires* with a heterogeneous ethnic composition reposing on the community of land and water resources and the ideology of religious solidarity (especially in Bukhara and Kokand). In such ideological and political context, any origins of ethnic discord found themselves suppressed. They were deprived of a possibility to develop into ethnic or racial superiority doctrines as was the case in Europe on the tide of the tragic “national self-determination” movement and, under its impact, in Japan at the end of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century

From the viewpoint of international politics, such a background could hardly simplify the situation. The divide between “us – them” and “native – alien” in the Central Asian context was more indistinct, conditional and permeable than in the cultures that produced M. Weber’s concepts. Conditionality of notions translated itself into conditionality or realities. In Europe, the clear-cut notions of “native” and “alien” materialized into a firm conviction of the need to respect other nations’ borders, at least at the level of legal and ethical standards.

Mutual tolerance of the Central Asian ethnoses and conditionality of the notional divide between “native” and “alien” turned into a lack of receptivity of such conditionally stable and originating from Europe principles of international relations as respect for *other* nations’ state borders and non-interference in other states’ affairs. Are Afghan affairs alien to Tajikistan or are they not, if there are more Tajiks in Afghanistan than in Tajikistan? Which of the two states shall an “average Tajik” consider his native one if he follows Weber’s model of thinking?

It is easier to give theoretical answers to these questions than to find practical solutions for strengthening peace and security in the regional countries.

Similar self-identification problems face Uzbeks and Tajiks in North Tajikistan (Hudjand), the Uzbek cities of Samarkand and Bukhara as well as Uzbeks, Tajiks and Kyrgyzs living in the Fergana Valley. Political boundaries were established contrary to the logic of traditional thinking of local residents. In combination with the peculiarities of the natural relief (mountains, passes and paths), these vague notions served as prerequisites and incentives for unpredictable migration of people, transportation (including smuggling) of goods and diffusion of conflicts.

Until now armed units opposing the Government of Uzbekistan use mountain passes and paths for moving from the Uzbek territory into Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan and back without clashing with the local population. The same paths are used for drug trafficking. Do drug-carrying caravans move on their own or under the protection of armed gangs? Drug and arms trafficking have common interests with anti-governmental movements, and the profile of their collaboration changes fast.

The 2005 spring conflict in the Uzbek part of the Fergana Valley (the city of Andizhan) was a part of the anti-governmental unrest, and similar events were simultaneously taking place in Kyrgyzstan originating from its Southern districts in the same valley. In a similar way, “infiltration” of conflicts from Afghanistan (from its areas populated by Tajiks and Uzbeks) into Tajikistan and Uzbekistan is a stable feature of the regional situation. Was the 2005 “maidan-type” revolution in Bishkek a “tulip” or a “poppy” one? Some analysts believe that its emblem could carry both flowers.

Political Reform Factor in Regional Relations

The most important issue in Central Asian politics is the reform of political systems in the CA countries. Strong traditional self-regulation structures in local communities represented by regional, tribal, kindred, clannish and other community ties leave traces on the conditions under which the coun-

tries' home and foreign policy is formed. Seven decades of semi-forced modernization of the Central Asian communities within the USSR and two decades of reforms as independent states have transformed the social nature of the Central Asian countries. The Soviet system replaced, after 1991, by authoritarian-pluralistic models (according to R. Scalapino)² have changed these countries' political images and laid a foundation, in most of them, for a development along the path on illiberal democracy (according to F. Zakaria).

However, traditional self-regulation structures were not destroyed, nor did they decompose. Having sustained the blow of the Bolshevik modernization in 1920–1940, they were able to survive thanks to the 1953–1963 decade of the “Thaw” and adapted themselves to the conditions of the “later” USSR” in the 1970s–1980s. Traditional structures found a place for themselves in the Soviet political system and learned how to cooperate with the Soviet bureaucracy and the party apparat helping it (for example, to mobilize the masses for labor campaigns) and sometimes finding a possibility to form their own unions.

Formally, the public administration systems in Kazakhstan and Central Asia were Soviet, but actual governance was dual. The countries were formally governed by the party and Soviet structures and informally – by the regional clanship system. The central headquarters of the Soviet Communist Party assessed the situation adequately and were trying not as much to change it by rooting out traditions as to use the traditional factors for regulating the situation in locales. Moscow used a system of quotas for representatives of each ethnic and regional group in the official authorities and rotation of representa-

² Robert Scalapino – a leading American orientalist and political scientist of the 1970–1980s, Director of the Institute of East Asian Studies of the University of California in Berkeley, the author of many papers in Sinology and Japanese studies.

According to him, “authoritarian pluralism” is a system “characterized by a constrained politics, with freedoms limited and decisions determined largely by individuals, not by law. Yet, a civil society exists apart from the state, and in fields like religion, education and the family, a considerable degree of autonomy prevails, the precise amount depending upon conditions. Further, the economy has a strong market component, albeit, with the state playing an important role as sponsor, guide and planner through neo-mercantilistic policies”. – R. Scalapino's letter to A.D. Bogaturov dated February 10, 1992.

tives of various clan groups as an instrument of influencing the policies of the Central Asian republics. In the second half of the 20th century, a dual social and political system took shape in that part of the USSR, earlier than in the other parts of the Soviet Union (in Transcaucasia, for example), and it was more mature. Local communities practiced two partially autonomous lifestyles. The first one was typical of the Soviet (modern) enclave. The second one belonged to the tribal, ethnic and regional (traditional) enclave. The second enclave included customs, regulatory precedents, codes of conduct and prohibitions as well as religious regulations while the habit of acquiring contemporary university education and participating in economic, social and political activity as well as election-holding practices belonged to the first one.

In their everyday behavior, people shifted from one enclave into the other and back shuttle-like. Soviet features combined with religious ones – Islamic, pre-Islamic and non-Islamic (Christian, Judaist and pagan). A modern market-oriented business went along with the custom of helping one’s unskilled relatives and acquaintances find employment. The habit of living according to Western consumption patterns intermixed with the traditional lifestyle, with its strict division of the social functions of men and women, and archaic notions about professions “worthy” and “unworthy” of man.

At the level of political conduct, all this developed, after 1991, into the habit of voting in conformity with the advice of “elder” people in the traditional sense of the word, including chiefs, clan and group leaders, elders, mullahs, older male relatives and, in their absence, other males.

The mechanism of maintaining public order was complicated but reliable. Anyway, in all Central Asian countries, except Tajikistan in the early 1990s, the enclave-conglomeratic structure of society³ prevented wars, breakup and chaos. And even the civil war in Tajikistan was caused by excessive political reforms under the pressure of the curtailed “Islamic democratic revolution” that had destroyed the old mechanism of regulat-

³ For the first time the concept was introduced in 1999. See *Polis Magazine*, 1999, # 4, pp. 60–69.

ing relations between the competing regional groups in the former Tajik SSR.

The failure of the experiment with the establishment of “Islamic democracy” frightened the former Soviet republics bordering on Tajikistan so much that their leaders had to take measures to fight the Islamic and the secular oppositions, including by force.

After that, reforms in Central Asia, insofar as they were carried out at all, were channeled into a conservative course. The civil war compromised the idea of instantaneous democratization according to Western models. The subsequent decade was used for stabilization and measured modernization of political systems. The Soviet machinery was replaced by governance systems characterized by a combination of official party and presidential institutions and informal traditional regulation⁴. The new states ceased to look Soviet-like. They rather resembled ordinary parliamentary or presidential republics.

Having repudiated the Soviet system, the Central Asian countries have retained their enclave-conglomeratic modernization principle. The modern and the traditional enclaves still co-exist there. The traditional aspect in the hands of the state power “supports” the modern one and makes it stronger and more authoritative. That is why some leaders of the Central Asian countries lose no possibility of appropriating the attributes of traditional tribal chiefs and even pseudo-monarchs (like Turkmenbashi in Turkmenistan), along with those of constitutionally legitimate leaders.

By overlaying Western forms of democratic governance over local traditionalism, the Central Asian countries emerged with the local versions of illiberal democracy. It is a model of political pluralism where the measure of authoritarianism and liberalism is determined by the countries’ inherent cultural traditions in all that applies to the notions of freedom and duty, individual and collective rights, and personal and public inter-

⁴ In his paper, a prominent orientalist and political scientist A.D. Voskresenskiy defines them as authoritarian or conservative paternalistic regimes. See: Воскресенский А.Д. Политические системы и модели демократии на Востоке. [Voskresenskiy A.D. Political Systems and Democratic Models in the East.] М.: Аспект-Пресс, 2007. С. 62.

ests. In the Central Asian political systems, the correlation between the "norm" and the "abnormality" is neither more nor less than that in the State structures of India, South Korea or Japan⁵ that were typical of the early stages of development of the democratic models in each of the above countries. From the political and social viewpoint, all of these countries are referred to the enclave-conglomeratic type as all other states with delayed political modernization including Russia and China.

Apparently, liberalization of the Central Asian political systems will be possible only after certain changes take place in the culture of these countries, primarily in the basic ideas of ethnoses about sufficiency or excessiveness, attractiveness of "freedom" or "non-freedom", individual competition or community and corporate solidarity, everyone's responsibility for one's own self (and equality) or patronage (and subordination).

It does not mean that the Central Asian countries may afford to suspend reforms. The imminent change of generation of their leaders makes them think of the need to go on with modernization. However, forced democratization can prove as dangerous to them as attempts to remain within the paradigm of superficial reforms whose stabilizing resource has been exhausted to a considerable degree.

Peculiarities of Foreign Political Conduct of the Central Asian Countries

The novelty of the present-day international environment in Central Asia consists in the liberation of the smaller nations from their passive role of objects of influence of major powers. In the two decades following the breakup of the USSR, the smaller Central Asian nations have greatly progressed towards conducting a rational foreign policy. Most of them have been able to formulate more or less convincing foreign political concepts, be it

⁵ The number of illiberal democracies increases along with the distance between the region under review and Europe as well as the democratic models that have absorbed the specificity of the European cultural experience. From the typological viewpoint, Japan is an illiberal democracy, although probably "the least illiberal one".

the differing permanent neutrality versions of Turkmenistan and Kyrgyzstan, the regional leadership doctrines of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan or the national security concept of Tajikistan, even though not all of them have received an official status.

There are three types of foreign political conduct of smaller countries in respect of superior powers. The first one is the “*agent*” type (“I am **your** younger brother and assistant, and my land is your bastion, fort and fortress”; this type has replaced for former vassalic, homage-like conduct). The second one is the “*defensive*” type (“you are **my** enemy, and I am preparing to fight you whether you attack me or may just wish to attack”). The third one is the “*partnership-like*” type (“**we** are not obliged to each other and we try to cooperate not only with each other but also with all other countries regardless of the difference in our capacity”).

In the first case, countries try to cling to a powerful state bargaining for some privileges in exchange. In the second case, they may aggravate relations with a knowingly stronger country wishing to attract the attention of the international community by intentionally focusing on threats, actually or presumably stemming from the stronger power. In the third case, *smaller nations try to distance themselves cautiously from all powerful states in an attempt to stand well with all of them and win over at least some small autonomous space.*

The first type of conduct attracts countries called satellites. The second type is characteristic of unaccomplished or irresolute states (ranging from North Korea and Venezuela to Georgia). The third group includes neutral and non-aligned states demonstrating diverse forms of foreign policy ranging from India’s “nuclear non-alignment” to the much more restrained and flexible “antinuclear neutralism” of Malaysia, Indonesia and Vietnam.

The Central Asian nations seem to have a propensity for the third type. It matches their possibilities and the specific nature of international conditions they are developing in. The main one of these conditions (favorable but also money-losing for small nations) is the loose international environment, in which Russia, China and the USA have had neither a possibility nor the desire to bind local countries to their military and political strategies in the course of 20 years.

Guided by caution or ideas about a worthy conduct, the Central Asian nations avoid extremes. While distancing themselves from Russia and images of the “parts of the former USSR”, the Central Asian countries have also avoided the temptation to proclaim themselves “a part of the West”. Their infatuation, initially with Turkey and later with China, has provoked them neither into following the example of the latter nor into turning into components of the “Pan-Turanian space”.

Having restricted Russia’s influence, the Central Asian countries have not permitted any degradation of their relationship with it and have retained a possibility of resorting to its resources (financial, technological, human, political, diplomatic and sometimes military) when necessary. In exchange, they permit Russia to use their spatial, geopolitical and partially primary energy potential. Local nationalism, with its tinge of Islam and local pre-Islamic cultures, has not developed into either religious extremism or secular xenophobia and chauvinism. A positive role in this context was played by the powerful Soviet educational, cultural and atheistic heritage and the tradition of supra-national social group solidarity inherent in the USSR in combination with the oasis culture of tolerance to people speaking other languages.

The Central Asian nations have mastered the tactics of conduct of the states of the neutralist and conditionally neutralist type and continue to perfect it. This type of conduct brings them closer to the ASEAN member-states, some of whom (the Philippines, Thailand) resort to a combination of allied commitments to the United States and an orientation towards regional cooperation priorities, some forms of which may have some concealed anti-American orientation.

In a similar way, the Central Asian nations are striving to reduce their dependence on Russia as a buyer and transporter of their energy. This does not however prevent them from wishing to remain under the “umbrella” of the CSTO, which remains a political rather than a military institution.

In whole, the situation orientates the smaller states towards a policy characterized by pragmatism, flexibility, diplomatic maneuvering, avoidance of burdensome external commitments and desire to attract aid from richer countries. To this end, they

bargain for reciprocal concessions from Russia, the USA, India, China or rich Islamic countries.

This does not mean that Russia's Central Asian neighbors are perfidious. It would be more appropriate to apply this expression to those countries whose leaders got the better of B.N. Yeltsin in 1991 and destroyed the Soviet country. *At that time, the Central Asian nations wished to gain more freedom in their relationship with Moscow but not a complete separation from Russia.*

There is now no point in either scoffing at or regretting it. Another thing is more important. Pragmatism in the policy of the Central Asian nations sides with historical memory, in which negative associations are balanced by a substantial set of notions about the positive heritage of their relationship with Russia. The rise of the cultural and educational level, the establishment of a healthcare system and the laying of foundations a contemporary political system can repose on are the fruits of existence of the Central Asian countries within the USSR.

The Soviet system acted in Central Asia as despotically as it did throughout the rest of the Soviet Union. In that sense, it is a common source of misfortunes for all Soviet nations. But despite all flaws, it had prepared Central Asia well for the selective and measured perception of the novelties of the 1990s when all of the former Union republics became independent states.

That system permitted local authorities to check grassroots protest, direct Islamization into moderate channels and cope with the onslaught of transnational criminal and contrabandist structures, which posed a threat to the existence of the Central Asian states together with local and foreign extremists. The scenarios of division of Tajikistan, breakup of Kyrgyzstan and establishment of a criminal "Fergana Caliphate" failed, and the abortive "Islamic Revolution" did not produce dispiriting results it did in Afghanistan.

"Delayed Neutrality" Concept

Geographically and partially politically, the center of Central Asia, as viewed from Russia, seems to be located between Astana and Tashkent. But from the viewpoint of "pri-

mary energy diplomacy” in its foreign versions, the central position in the region belongs to the Caspian Sea, or rather its Eastern coast, and Turkmenistan’s gas fields. It is them that American and EU authors imply in their discourse about the role of Central Asia in world politics and economics.

However, the attitude towards Central Asia as towards an “object” of international policy still prevails in their perception of the region. American and EU politicians and scholars assess the situation in that part of the world through the lenses of whatever profitable or dangerous it may promise. A considerable number of Russian and Chinese statesmen and experts actually stick to the same point of view, with corresponding amendments. The smaller countries have so far aroused little interest as international policy subjects.

Analysts, at the best, tried to appraise to what extent they would be able to interfere with or to promote the achievement of the goals of major powers. In the process, each major nation tried to form an idea of what leverage it could use to increase its impact on the regional situation. American analysts believed that democratization including a revolutionary one, at first with the “Islamic democracy” tinge and later on of the maidan type, would be an all-powerful instrument. Russian and Chinese scholars were in favor of conservative versions of reforms of the Central Asian economies and their political systems. The optimal way of stabilizing the situation, viewed by Russia and China as favorable for them, seemed a moderately reformist course balancing between selective political liberalization and application of market-oriented mechanisms under public control.

The smaller countries have to maneuver. However, their foreign policy does not boil down to maneuvering. The Central Asian nations have a propensity for neutralism. In the 1990s, Turkmenistan and Kyrgyzstan⁶ attempted to declare it offi-

⁶ In fact, all concepts of the Central Asian countries are neutralist in their essence. Such are the doctrines of the “multidirectional policy” and the “open-door policy” of Tajikistan, the concepts of the “Silk Road diplomacy” and the establishment of a nuclear-free area in Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan’s neutrality, and Kazakhstan’s “Eurasianism” interpreted as a simultaneous orientation towards Russia, the European Union, the USA and China. Uzbekistan sticks to the logic of “free hands and alliances”, which is also a version of “potential neutrality”.

cially. True, there is no question of classical neutrality, as practiced by Switzerland and Sweden, in the local context. Sources of threats from Afghanistan, Fergana extremists and potential instability in the Islamic regions of China remain in the region. The experience of Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan proper shows that classical neutrality in that part of the world is illusory.

That is why when thinking about prospects of neutrality, the Central Asian countries may sooner rely on the version of “moderately armed neutrality” per sample of the ASEAN member-states. Under certain circumstances, such a version could suit all of the Central Asian countries including Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan. On the strength of military and political realities however this version is unsuitable for immediate implementation. The Central Asian countries are involved in multilateral relations with Russia within the CSTO framework as well as with Russia and China within the SCO. True, flexibility of commitments under these treaties and lack of elaborated practices of their implementation permit their member-countries to remain independent in their foreign political conduct. Both treaties act as coordinating and threat-preventing instruments rather than military organizations capable of rapidly mobilizing the resources of their member-countries⁷.

At the same time, availability of these structures provides the smaller countries with guarantees of internal and international security. And at that, they retain a possibility of measur-

⁷ There is no inconsistency in it. The NATO, especially since the start of the war in Iraq (2003), has also been evolving towards easing its member-countries' commitments. It is turning from a stiff military alliance into a “bloc of political and ideological solidarity” and a pool of military, economic and spatial resources of its member-states. Judging by all facts, the NATO smaller member-countries may participate or choose not to participate in the wars waged by the more powerful states of the alliance. Despite the entirely different conditions, this model of the NATO's functioning is similar to the one that is taking shape within the CSTO and the SCO without prior arrangement. Romania and Iceland, for example, in emergency situations may either participate in the operations defending the interests of their NATO “sister nations” or take a stand very close to what has been described before as a “minimally armed neutrality”.

ing their practical involvement in cooperation with Russia and China without rejecting the policy of balancing and orientation towards neutrality in principle.

Integration of the line towards partnership with Russia and China and the desire to develop cooperation with the USA and the EU, independently from the other two countries and without getting involved in military cooperation outside of the minimally necessary security limits, into the foreign policies of the Central Asian countries is typical of a foreign political conduct, which can be described as *potential or delayed* neutrality. This principle has *actually* become a system-building element of international relations in Central Asia.

The Shaping of Ethnopolitical Correlations in the Region

As almost the entire central and Eastern part of the Eurasian continent, Central Asia has been shaped in the historical and political respect under the influence of interaction between settled and nomadic ethnoses. Settled cultures were formed under more favorable conditions in the Southern parts of Central Asia, in the oases with fertile soil and water. Nomadic peoples used to come down in waves from the North-East and conquer the settled ethnoses taking root among them and forming public and political communities with them that developed into multi-ethnic territorial states of the imperial type. However, invasions destroyed the seats of settled culture and exterminated their population. Nomadic economy based on the archetype of gathering parasitized on the seats of farming and compensated its own weak points with the wealth captured during the plunder of oases.

Settled cultures were fast in giving birth to states. Not suitable for organized exploitation in its traditional forms, nomadic lifestyle had *initially* acted as an alternative to statehood. Nomads however found a way of adapting themselves to statehood by forming a kind of a symbiosis with it. In the Bukhara Emirate, for example, nomads' descendants formed a

“specialized clan” – a stratum (a tribe, as a matter of fact) of professional warriors⁸.

Some invaders became the backbone of new ruling elites, while others mixed with the population of the conquered territory, not necessarily merging with it, to form the grassroots together with it. In a number of cases, “ethnic specialization” of various population groups could remain intact for centuries: the conquered groups were inclined to engage in their customary economic activity (such as farming, handicrafts, construction of fortresses and canals, and trade) while newcomers preferred to remain and to become warriors, junior managers and later also traders. Of course, mutual penetration of ethnic specializations did take place. But ethnically tinted archetypes of economic conduct (according to M. Weber and A.S. Ahieser) have remained well discernable in the Central Asian countries to this day characterizing occupations of “historically indigenous” and “historically alien”⁹ population groups (Russians, Ukrainians, Armenians, Ashkenazi Jews and Greeks).

At the start of the 20th century, the arrival of migrants from the Russian Empire proceeded partly in conformity with the above trends and partly contrary to them. From the viewpoint of historical and demographic trends, the Cossacks of the Valley of Seven Rivers who consolidated their positions under P.A. Stolypin represented a phenomenon associated with another conquest of the region by Northern newcomers. The difference consisted in the fact that all previous waves of “Northern” conquests were invasions of a farming culture by nomadic ones. The conquest of Central Asia by Russia was, the other way round, an expansion of a farming culture into a nomadic one (with regard

⁸ The same goes for the Tatars of the Crimean Khanate who constituted a minority there as compared to their non-Tatar subjects (Armenians, Greeks, Karaites and other inhabitants of the Crimea). After the breakup of the USSR and partial “retribalization” of social relations in some parts of the region, the clans of professional smugglers and drug dealers have also started behaving like “specialized tribes”. The tribal behavioral archetypes frozen under the Soviet system have begun to revive.

⁹ It is a purely conditional division, for in the course of two hundred years that have passed since Russians and Ukrainians first came to Central Asia they have taken root there and represent *indigenous population* groups of the relevant countries in all senses except historical one.

to Kazakhstan) and of one farming culture into another (with regard to the Tashkent and Fergana oases).

The archetypes of ethnically tinted economic specialization in the Russian Empire and the USSR produced ethnopolitical specialization. Some of the Northern conquerors were inclined to specialize in administration while others joined the urban and rural grassroots where they formed subgroups of farmers and, in the course of industrialization, workers, engineers, physicians, teachers and liberal professionals. The Russian element began to play a predominant role in the administrative bodies of the annexed territories. After the 1917 revolutions in Russia and subsequent inclusion of the Emirates of Bukhara and Khiva into the USSR, the composition of the regional political and administrative elite became more ethnically diverse. Russian and Ukrainian elements were supplemented by both other non-indigenous ethnoses (Jews and Armenians) and local population groups who had gained a broader access to power without discrimination on religious, political and ethnic grounds.

The “Soviet elite” in Central Asia was multi-ethnic. In this respect, the mechanism of its formation was in keeping with the mutual ethnic tolerance and traditions of the *oasis-imperial* ideology customary for the region. The top leaders of the Soviet Central Asian republics were generally Moscow’s appointees selected among either local residents or newcomers from the other parts of the USSR.

Inclusion of Central Asia into the Soviet Union caused changes in the region. Among the most important innovations was the introduction of a settled lifestyle in Kazakhstan and implementation of a water and land reform in the Southern part of the region. Not wishing to adopt the settled way of life, some of the Kazakh and Kyrgyz clans fled to Xinjiang in China.

The most important political outcome of the land and water reform was the complete liquidation of the rural part of the Russian Diaspora in Central Asia. Cossacks who had taken root in the Valley of Seven Rivers sided with the White Guard in the face of Soviet innovations. In the course of the civil war, Cossacks and their families were exterminated or subject to repression or had to flee to Xinjiang following Kazakhs and

Kyrgyzs. Since then, the Russian Diaspora in the region has existed almost exclusively in cities, with the exception of North Kazakhstan during the period of virgin land reclamation.

During World War Two, from 3 to 5 million people were evacuated to Central Asia and Kazakhstan from the European part of the USSR. They were mostly well-educated people who helped address major social issues and accomplish cultural development tasks. Illiteracy was wiped out and foundations of a healthcare system were laid down. The same period witnessed the development of modern theatrical and musical art and literature in Central Asia as well as the establishment of a university education system. A certain part of newcomers left the region later while another part remained and contributed to its ethnic diversity.

The trends connected with the deportation of Germans, Crimean Tatars, Balkars, Karachais, Greeks, Chechens, Ingushs and other peoples from the Volga Region, the Crimea and the Northern Caucasus acted in the same direction. In subsequent years, waves of political emigrants from Greece reached the region. After the completion of restoration works following the 1966 earthquake in Tashkent, some workers of construction teams of varying ethnicities also stayed on.

“Dual” Political Governance System in Soviet Central Asian Republics and Kazakhstan

The architecture of ethnic specializations began to change since the 1950s. “Historically indigenous” ethnoses began to aspire after concentrating political and administrative power in their hands. Moscow supported the practice of appointing natives to top positions while retaining the right of their approval. Meanwhile, representatives of non-indigenous ethnic groups and non-local residents were appointed by Moscow as their deputies (second secretaries of the Communist party central and regional committees) as a regular practice. The latter assumed the duty of supervising republican state security bodies (the KGB), providing the central authorities with objective information from locales, observing the ethnopolitical processes and sometimes regulating them by impartial mediation.

Second secretaries however could discharge their functions only with limited success. Being aliens, they found it hard to orientate themselves in the informal mechanisms regulating public relations in Central Asia, were excluded from them and often found themselves isolated from them and the relevant information. *In absence of official democratic career development and benefit distribution tools, mechanisms of informal regulation of public relations based on ethnic, kindred, clannish and other ties began to form anew (or to revive).*

As a result, top leaders of the Union republics could establish a kind of parallel power structures if they wished to. In addition to the official party and Soviet subordination hierarchy, informal governance systems using mechanisms that mobilized the loyalty of certain population groups (clans, expatriates' communities, elders) in the interests of native top leaders were gradually emerging.

Religious figures generally exercised an indirect influence over those structures remaining outside of public authority bodies. They nonetheless had a possibility of influencing cultural workers who could represent the opinion of *religious quarters* in bodies of authority while remaining *secular* in their conduct and openly expressed views.

Starting from the early 1960s, a "dual" governance system has actually existed in Central Asia. One part of it was official and regulated in staffing and political respects in accordance with the supra-ethnic ideology and ethics of the Soviet Communist Party while the other one was informal, traditional, ethnically tinted and closed to Moscow's influence. The first one was an instrument of modernization, evening-out of ethnic differences and centralization. The other one was a means of conservation of traditional communities and ethnic peculiarities, and accumulation of political and ideological capacity for the republics' independence. The most mature "dual governance" system was formed in Kazakhstan under D.A. Kunaev, in Uzbekistan under S.R. Rashidov and in Turkmenistan under S.A. Niyazov. Nomadic economy, rudiments of which had survived in those republics, possibly served as a foundation for preserving tribal ties and archaic social relations.

Economic relations in the Soviet Union generally met the interests of the Central Asian elites although the aftereffects of economic transformations of that time were contradictory. For example, the irrational irrigation policy and forced cotton growing resulted in extravagant overuse of water resources of major rivers. Construction of the Kara Kum Canal named after V.I. Lenin created technical possibilities for redistributing resources of the Amu-Darya River in favor of Turkmenistan, which used them for irrigating deserts in its Southern areas. All CA republics adopted wasteful water-use economic models that led to severe environmental consequences. As a result of water withdrawal for irrigation purposes, the Amu-Darya runoff into the Aral Sea almost dropped to zero leading to its desiccation and ensuing environmental disaster.

At the same time, the future Central Asian nations had a number of substantial advantages within the framework of a single economic structure of the USSR. In the 1980s, the share of the Russian Federation in the All-Union budget constituted 21%, with Kazakhstan contributing 16% and Kyrgyzstan 12%. The other three Central Asian republics were exempted from payments to the Union budget and spent their revenues on their domestic needs.

Moreover, the Union Government allocated large subsidies to them on an annual basis from the All-Union budget formed by the contributions of the other Soviet republics. Besides that, large amounts of money exceeding state subsidies from the Union budget were transferred from the Russian Federation to citizens' personal accounts in the Central Asian republics. Under such circumstances, the republican authorities wished to become independent from Moscow in their "domestic affairs" rather than disaffiliate with the economic structure of the Soviet Union.

Pulling up Central Asia to the level of development of the USSR at large played a role in raising local population's living standards. Owing to this help, a sharp drop in child mortality was achieved and followed by a baby boom. The reform of the secondary and higher education, its accessibility and a relatively high quality produced a large number of educated professionals who found no employment in their native republics. The

number of jobs for persons with a university education was increasing slower than the number of such persons. Competition for prestigious and well-paid jobs acquired an ethnic nature. Professionals who belonged to the "historically indigenous groups" demanded employment privileges over "historical newcomers" and obtained them. Prior to the breakup of the USSR, nothing like the present-day migration of unskilled labor force from Central Asia to Russia took place.

Hidden unemployment emerged in the region. It led to dissatisfaction, which could be easily directed against Moscow. Russians reproached the Union Government for its unwillingness to protect their rights in the Union republics while representatives of the "historically indigenous ethnoses" spoke of Moscow's responsibility for the "colonial structure" of their republics' economy.

In contrast to the republics' party and economic elite, local creative intelligentsia had limited access to the economic benefits stemming from their republics' membership in the USSR. As was the case in Iran at the end of 1970s, in the late 1980s and the early 1990s the educated strata in the Central Asian countries helped formulate the first opposition programs in the spirit of ethnic traditionalism. They incorporated ideas of foreign Islamists, which penetrated into the cultural environment of the Central Asian republics as their contacts with the outside world expanded. Signs of inter-ethnic discord and separatist feelings were building up in the region.

As the "dual" sociopolitical structure in Central Asia grew stronger, the "historically newly arrived" ethnoses lost their influence and once auspicious positions in the administrative and political governance systems and found themselves ousted into the economic area at the best. In the last two decades of existence of the USSR, indigenous ethnic groups enjoyed broad informal privileges in acquiring education and occupying executive positions. Representatives of other ethnic groups became uncompetitive under the Central Asian conditions.

The growing awareness of the situation incited annoyance among Russians and other population groups, which became known in Moscow. During the short rule of Y. V. Andropov (1982–1983), the central authorities attempted to toughen the

representation quotas for various population groups in the governmental bodies of the Union republics by restricting their number in various positions. In the mid-1980s, the Union authorities also tried to restore the practice of appointing representatives of non-indigenous nationalities to top positions in the Union republics in an attempt to restrict the role of informal mechanisms in regulating the situation in locales. However, the “restructuring” and democratization in the USSR made the course towards tightening control of the central authorities over the Union republics footless.

* * *

The report has been prepared based on the research project of the Academic and Educational Forum on International Relations (AEFIR) “International Relations in Central Asia”. The project’s findings will be published in a short while. The paper has been written by analysts from various cities of the Russian Federation, and the entire project is a result of interregional networking of international affairs experts from Russia and some CIS countries around the Academic and Educational Forum on International Relations and the International Trends Magazine with the support of the McArthur Foundation whose Moscow branch is headed by I.A. Zevelev.

Russia’s interest in Central Asia is growing, and subjects dealing with the relevant countries are now taught at leading universities to train a new generation of professionals. This is complicated by lack of a summarizing analysis of international relations in the region. The authors have tried to contribute their share to addressing this practical issue in the first place.

A major role in the preparation of the present paper has been played by our colleagues from the Moscow State Institute of International Relations under the Foreign Ministry of Russia, the Institute of Oriental Studies and the Institute of International Security Issues of the Russian Academy of Sciences as well as the Institute of Asian and African Countries under the Moscow State University named after M.V. Lomonosov. The authors received assistance in the form of advice and direct participation from their colleagues at the Tomsk State University and the Amur State University (the city

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International Relations in Central Asia in the 2000s

A new feature that showed up in the situation in the early 2000s was a noticeable intensification of the presence of China, who was striving to become the second major political and military force in the region after Russia. The paramount goal of the PRC was to limit the possibilities of Western countries in gaining and expanding their strategic foothold in Central Asia. Objectively, the region looked like the PRC's strategic "rear" if China's diplomatic confrontation with the USA over the issue of Taiwan that Beijing had been striving to annex for decades was to be regarded as the "frontline" of China's foreign policy.

The region had also started to acquire greater economic importance for the PRC because the rapid growth of the Chinese economy in the 1990s was accompanied by skyrocketing consumption of energy and various kinds of mineral feedstock. The import of primary energy from Central Asia seemed a favorable prospect for the PRC, the more so since Chinese goods were in demand in the markets of the Central Asian smaller countries.

China was cautious in pursuing its course towards expanding its influence in the region. The PRC's diplomacy tried to avoid competition with Russia, which it viewed not so much as a rival but as a partner in preventing the West from strengthening its positions. That was why China laid emphasis on versatility. It was intensifying its role in regional affairs within the framework of the Chinese-Russian bilateral partnership and multilateral cooperation, in which the CA smaller countries participated along with the PRC and Russia.

Establishment of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (June 2001)

As it has already been pointed out, since 1996 China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan have been regularly conducting five-sided meetings. The so-called "Shanghai Forum" came into being and was joined by Uzbekistan in the

capacity of an observer some time later. At their regular meeting in Shanghai in June 2001, the five countries adopted a declaration on the establishment of a new international organization – the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). Uzbekistan joined the newly-formed organization as a full member. The member-countries signed a convention on combating terrorism, separatism and extremism.

The initiative to institutionalize the Shanghai process came from China. The SCO member-countries had different views on the priority lines of cooperation. The Central Asian countries were trying to switch the SCO’s attention over to economic issues. China was interested in intensifying cooperation in the area of politics and security, primarily in the struggle against Islamic extremism threatening stability in Xinjiang. Russia occupied an intermediate position.

In Moscow and the capitals of the CA smaller countries they did not want the SCO to look like a bulwark of struggle against the American influence. The PRC felt less constrained in regional political issues. Besides, China found it highly important to obtain political support of the CA smaller countries in holding back extremist, primarily Uyghur, groups of Islamic population in the XUAR. Some Uyghur separatist organizations had support points in the Central Asian countries, and the commitment of the latter to cooperate with Beijing in the security area would have made it possible to exert more pressure on the groups of Uyghur radicals abroad.

The SCO’s politicization intensified after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attack on the American cities of New York and Washington. Following the attack, the USA supported by Russia, China and the EU member-countries started to form a “global antiterrorist coalition”. It was primarily directed against terrorist groups operating under Islamic mottos.

The SCO, mostly thanks to Beijing’s persistent efforts supported by Russia, accelerated the drafting of its charter and agreement on the establishment of a regional antiterrorist structure. In July 2002, the Charter was signed at the SCO Summit in St. Petersburg. Simultaneously, an agreement on regional antiterrorist structure (RATS) was signed, with its headquarters to be located in Bishkek.

Conclusion of the Russian-Chinese Treaty of Good-Neighborliness, Friendship and Cooperation

The Russian-Chinese Treaty of Good-Neighborliness, Friendship and Cooperation was signed in Moscow on July 16, 2001, for a period of 20 years. It was an ambitious document, which drew a considerable response in the world. The Russian-Chinese arrangements could be subdivided into three groups. The first one (Article 2 to 7) applied to the political foundations of cooperation. The Parties announced their mutual renunciation of the use of force, first use of nuclear weapons and mutual targeting of strategic nuclear missiles. They also declared their adherence to the principles of peaceful co-existence and mutual respect for the right of each side to choose its way of development. A separate mention was made concerning mutual support by the Parties of each other's stands on the issues of ensuring state integrity, which implied recognition by the Russian Federation of the PRC's stand on the issue of Taiwan (the PRC Government is China's sole lawful representative, and Taiwan is a part of China) and Russia's stand on the Chechen issue by China. The purport of Articles 2 to 7 was tantamount to provisions of a non-aggression pact.

The second group of arrangements (Articles 8 to 10) concerned the holding of regular Chinese-Russian consultations on safeguarding peace and security and renouncing accession to any unions and blocs detrimental to one of the Parties. The Parties agreed to establish contact with each other in the event of a threat to peace with the aim of eliminating it. This group of mutual commitments resembled provisions typical of alliance-forming treaties, although the word "alliance" never appeared in the text of the Russian-Chinese Treaty.

This impression was intensified by Articles 11 and 12, which read that the PRC and Russia came out for observing the international law norms and against any attempts of steamroller approach or interference in the domestic affairs of sovereign states under any pretext whatsoever. After the NATO interventions in Yugoslavia in 1986 and 1999, this provision could be treated as a claim to establishing a Russian-Chinese coalition in defense of the right to sovereignty and a guarantee

of non-interference as opposed to the policy and practice of the so-called “humanitarian interventions” advocated by the NATO member-countries.

The provisions on the Parties’ intentions to exert every effort to observe the global strategic balance and stability and to promote the observance of fundamental agreements stipulating for strategic stability sounded as criticism of the USA. At that time, the US Administration did not conceal its plans of deploying a national anti-missile defense system, which betrayed Washington’s intention to revise the provisions of the 1972 Soviet-American ABM Treaty, which aroused Russia’s strong objections. Article 20 declared the intention of the Parties to cooperate in fighting terrorism.

The way it was, the Russian-Chinese Treaty was not a typical military and political treaty that used to be signed in the 20th century. But it was a set of mutual commitments, which signaled transition of the Russian-Chinese relations from the phase of all-round normalization (1989-2001) to the phase of establishment of a political alliance with some elements of cooperation in the security area. The West received the Treaty with suspicion. Analysts wrote about the establishment of a Russian-Chinese anti-NATO “axis”. Mutual suspicion in the Russian-US relations increased.

In the summer of 2002, another SCO Summit was held in St. Petersburg, which approved its Charter. Simultaneously, its member-countries decided to establish an international anti-terrorist center in Bishkek by collective effort.

US War against the Afghan Taliban and Its Impact on the Regional Situation

The September 11, 2001 terrorist acts in the United States gave a pretext to the USA and a number of the American NATO allies for launching a military operation against the Afghan Taliban. The United States started delivering concentrated blows from the air on their positions while forces of the Northern Alliance supported by a broad coalition of countries including the USA, Russia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and other

states launched an offensive against Kabul from the North. Meeting with no opposition from Moscow, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan decided to let the United States establish military bases in their territories. In December 2001, Kabul was seized by the Northern Alliance forces, and a complicated process of establishment of a new government started in Afghanistan. Talibs were driven off to the Pakistani border or into the territory of Pakistan.

The war against the Taliban gave impetus to a change in internal parameters of strategic relations in Central Asia. Another most important new feature of the situation was the US military presence in the region. American military bases were set up in Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. In addition to them, four American bases were established in Pakistan. Besides that, the NATO-led International Security Assistance Forces (ISAF) nine to eleven thousand strong were deployed in the Afghan territory. Washington began to produce a considerable impact on the regional system.

The expansion of the American military presence in Central Asia aggravated China's positions. Unexpectedly for China, the American policy of development of political and military contacts with the neighbors situated along the Chinese borders encompassed the region viewed by Beijing as its strategic rear and a potential sphere of Chinese influence. This produced new incentives for China to intensify its multilateral diplomacy in the region and bilateral contacts with local countries in the area of security and energy cooperation.

From the short-term perspective, the Russian Federation was basically satisfied with the outcome of the military victory won at the expense of the US resources over the Taliban regime hostile to it. At the same time, the US military presence on the southern boundaries of Central Asia had sharply increased the competitive nature of the regional environment to the detriment of Russian interests. In the long-term perspective, this was fraught with complicated problems for Moscow. If Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan joined the system of the US military presence in the region, the boundaries of Moscow's influence on the Central Asian countries could shrink sharply. The probability that the CA small and medium-size countries

would depart from allied relations with Russia towards non-alignment, neutralism or even reorientation towards an alliance with the USA had increased.

An alliance of the Central Asian nations with the USA would have broadened access of American companies to energy resources on the Eastern shore of the Caspian Sea and reduced Russia’s role in the global energy sector. To prevent the “extreme” scenarios of this kind, Russia needed to increase its investment and intensify its policy in the region. From that moment on, Russia had to take into consideration competition on the part of the USA and not only of China.

The situation in Afghanistan remained extremely unstable. The new pro-American Government of Hamid Karzai did not enjoy the support of the Afghan tribal nobility. Its powers were supported by NATO soldiers and limited to Kabul. The Taliban were deprived of any power in locales but it passed into the hands of field commanders who recognized the priority of H. Karzai who became President on June 13, 2002 (and was reelected in 2009) only conditionally. Production of opium poppy increased in the country sharply. The American occupation forces and the Kabul Government were unable to prevent it and had to reconcile themselves to the development of the “narcocconomics”, which resulted in increasing drug trafficking from Afghanistan. The fight to control the Northern drug trafficking route via Fergana and Russia into the EU countries continued.

The situation in Afghanistan destabilized the situation in Pakistan. Meanwhile, in 1998 Pakistan and India tested nuclear weapons and became “illegal nuclear powers”. The inflow of talibs into Afghanistan had sharply increased the capacity of militant Pakistani Islamic groups that came out against President P. Musharraf. An “Islamic revolution” in Pakistan could result in nuclear weapons getting into the hands of extremists, and that could add a nuclear dimension to the conflict in Afghanistan, with grave consequences for the neighboring Central Asian countries.

The Iranian-American contradictions intensified in connection with Iran’s nuclear program. The Iranian leadership was frightened by the appearance of American troops near its Eastern border as well as by the network of American Air Force

bases in Central Asia and Pakistan. Teheran was inclined to interpret the Iranian nuclear program as an instrument of restricting Washington's bellicosity

At the same time, the obvious signs of radicalization of the ruling regime in Teheran and prospects of Iran coming into possession of nuclear weapons challenged stability in Central Asia. China, Russia and India were striving to moderate the radical nature of Iran's policy and involve it in multilateral cooperation institutions.

By supporting the United States in its war against the Taliban, Pakistan strengthened its international positions. The sanctions imposed on Islamabad by Washington after the 1998 nuclear tests were lifted. The volume of American economic aid increased and military-technical cooperation intensified.

The US war against the Taliban also led to intensification of India's foreign policy. Delhi began to view Central Asia as one of the country's "security horizons". The opening of a small Indian military base in Tajikistan was a symbolic event. India began to build up its influence in Afghanistan and develop military-technical and political cooperation with Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan.

Conditions were ripe for turning Central Asia into an area of competition between India, China and Pakistan for access to energy resources and influence on the Central Asian countries. India's diplomatic efforts met with understanding on the part of the United States. The American Administration doubted the sustainability of Pakistan's pro-American orientation, and American-Indian relations could serve as an alternative to partnership with it. Besides that, India looked like a counterpoise to China in the assessments of American politicians.

Intensification of the policy of ex-regional states gave rise to new sets of contradictions. Instability of energy markets and the 2008–2009 global financial crisis introduced an additional share of nervousness into the situation. Nonetheless, the CA smaller countries tried to show restraint and avoid open speculation on contradictions between strong powers although the space for such maneuvering had objectively increased.

The downfall of the Taliban regime delivered the Central Asian nations from their main external threat. A strong blow was dealt on extremist and terrorist groups including the Islamic

Movement of Uzbekistan. However, the growth of drug production in Afghanistan and increasing volumes of drug trafficking via the Central Asian territory intensified criminalization of economy in the Central Asian states, especially the poorest ones. The financial and social base of extremist organizations and terrorist groups was strengthening. The alliance between the drug dealing and terrorism was the main challenge to regional stability.

Establishment of the CSTO (2001) and Military and Political Cooperation of Smaller Countries with Russia

The start of the US war in Afghanistan gave impetus to reorganization of military and political relations within the CIS. On the one hand, the factor of American military presence in Central Asia challenged Russia's interests. But on the other hand, rapprochement between Moscow and Washington based on a concerted opposition to international terrorism neutralized the potentially anti-western bias that the deepening of Russia's military and political cooperation with its CIS partners could assume. That was politically and psychologically important both to Russia and the Central Asian nations.

As it has already been mentioned, the five-year validity period of the 1992 Tashkent Treaty (which entered into effect in April 1994) expired in May 1999. Three countries – Azerbaijan, Georgia and Uzbekistan – refused to extend their membership in it. Azerbaijan was dissatisfied with the growing Russian-Armenian cooperation and lack of progress in the settlement of the Karabakh issue, and Georgia – with Russia's tolerance to Abkhaz and South-Ossetian separatism. Uzbekistan's stand was described in Chapter 6. The other six countries (Armenia, Belarus, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan) presented a group more or less united in their military and political interests. They decided to raise cooperation within the Collective Security Treaty to a higher level.

The composition of members, the desire of Russia's new leadership to be more active in its Central Asian policies, and the aggravation of terrorist, religious and extremist threats in the

region were conducive to a predominance of the Central Asian line in the CST. In May 2001, a decision was taken to establish a military component within the CST – a collective rapid deployment force (CRDF) in the Central Asian Collective Security Region. The CRDF consisting of military units from Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, numbered 1,500 servicemen. The CRDF Headquarters were located in Bishkek.

At their meeting in Moscow in May 2002, the six CST member-states decided to transform the Treaty into an international organization. On October 7, 2002, a charter of the Collective Security Treaty Organization was signed in Kishinev. The Charter set forth the commitment of its member-states to coordinate their foreign political stands on international security problems and the sanctions for a failure to implement the binding decisions taken.

According to the Charter, the CSTO superior body was the Collective Security Council. Such consultative and executive bodies as the Council of Foreign Ministers, the Council of Defense Ministers and the Committee of Security Councils Secretaries became functional. The Standing Council consisting of plenipotentiary representatives of the member-states was responsible for coordinating the implementation of the Organization's decisions. The United Headquarters were set up. The resolution on the CSTO establishment became effective in September 2003 following ratification of the Charter by the member-states. On August 16, 2006, an agreement was signed in Sochi on Uzbekistan's accession to the CSTO (or rather its reinstatement as a party to the Treaty).

Joint military exercises began to be conducted and Russian-made military hardware delivered at reduced prices within the CSTO framework. The Parties started to cooperate in training military personnel. A CSTO air base (actually a Russian military base) was established at the Kant airfield 20 km off Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, in October 2003. The CSTO remains the most powerful Central Asian multilateral military and political cooperation structure with a military component, which guaranteed assistance to its member-states in case of an aggression.

Military and political cooperation among the Central Asian countries predominantly evolves within the framework of

Russia-headed multilateral CSTO structures – the CIS Joint Air Defense System and the CIS Antiterrorist Center. This cooperation is supplemented by bilateral military and political contacts between Russia and the Central Asian countries. After Uzbekistan’s accession only Turkmenistan has remained outside the CSTO framework.

An important area of cooperation among the Central Asian countries is their participation in the CIS Joint Air Defense System (JADS). Although an agreement on its establishment was signed in 1995 by all of the Central Asian countries (of the CIS countries, only Azerbaijan and Moldova did not sign it), Turkmenistan has not participated in the JADS since 1997. To coordinate cooperation within the JADS, a steering committee headed by the Commander-in-Chief of the Russian AD Troops has been established.

At the end of 2000, a CIS antiterrorist center (ATC) was set up under the decision of the CIS Council of Heads of State. The Center is a permanent body coordinating the activity of special services in combating international terrorism and extremism. The ATC has a structural subunit for the Central Asian Region in Bishkek. Military exercises of the CIS special services are conducted on an annual basis. The Council of the CIS Heads of Security Bodies and Special Services is responsible for the ATC general guidance.

Russia has retained close military and political contacts with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. The Russian-Kazakhstani alliance was reinforced by the Agreement on the Joint Planning of the Use of Troops signed in 2003 and the 2004 Treaty of Cooperation and Coordination of Borderline Issues. A Russian military air base functioning within the CSTO’s CRDF has been established in Kyrgyzstan. In October 2004, Russia and Tajikistan settled the differences over the reorganization of the 201st Motorized Infantry Division that had been deployed in the country since Soviet times into a military base. Agreements were signed to concretize the 1999 Russian-Tajikistani Treaty. The Nurek Optical Electronic Complex of the Russian Military Aerospace Forces has become a part of the Russian air base. Russian servicemen in Tajikistan number over 5,000 persons (the largest Russian military contingent abroad).

According to the 2004 agreements, Russian border guards had been withdrawn from Tajikistan by 2006 and the Tajik Border Service assumed the function of protecting the state borders. Simultaneously, an operational border service of Russia's Federal Security Service (FSS) was established in Tajikistan. It has no military component and assists Tajik border guards in organizing border control and personnel training.

In 2004–2005, Russia and Uzbekistan signed the Strategic Partnership Treaty (June 16, 2004) and the Allied Relations Treaty (November 14, 2005). They stipulate for mutual assistance in case of an aggression by any third party and permit the Parties to use each other's military infrastructure on a mutual basis when necessary.

Military and Political Relations of Smaller Countries with the USA

After the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the USA proclaimed the global struggle against terrorism the paramount goal of its foreign policy. Afghanistan was the first object of its antiterrorist campaign, and Washington declared the Central Asian countries to be the “frontline states”.

Uzbekistan, who had more developed military and political relations with the United States, was the first country in the region to permit American servicemen to use its military infrastructure. From 1,000 to 1,500 American servicemen were stationed at the air base in Khanabad. Tashkent regarded the situation as a possibility to strengthen its status of a US partner in the region. In March 2002, the USA and Uzbekistan signed the Declaration on the Strategic Partnership and Cooperation Framework. It read that the USA would treat any external threat to the security and territorial integrity of the Republic of Uzbekistan with utmost seriousness.

The American-Tajik cooperation was also expanding. The US Air Force and those of its allies were granted the right of using the country's air space and stationing in Kulyab. The USA lifted restrictions on the supply of ammunition to *Tajikistan*.

In December 2001, *Kyrgyzstan* leased its air base at the Manas airport to the USA and its allies for a period of one year. In June 2003, the agreement on the terms and conditions of the air base lease was extended for three years, and in July 2006 – for another five years. In February 2009, President K. Bakiev, during his visit to Moscow, announced the country’s intention to sever the agreement on the lease of Manas. Since there was a simultaneous announcement of the consent of the Russian leadership to grant a substantial financial aid to *Kyrgyzstan* and invest in the construction of the Kambarata-1 hydropower plant, analysts ascribed the *Kyrgyz* demarche to Russia’s influence. In March of the same year, the *Kyrgyz* Parliament passed a law on the withdrawal of American servicemen from Manas by the end of August 2009, and soon after the *Kyrgyz* side denounced all agreements on the use of the base by the US allies.

However, in June 2009, after some secret negotiations between Bishkek and Washington, *Kyrgyzstan* and the USA concluded an agreement on the establishment of a transit traffic center at Manas, which practically permitted the latter to retain its use of the existing base under a different wording. The rental payment was raised from \$17.4 million to \$60 million per year. Bishkek’s step was counterpoised by the signing of a memorandum on the establishment of another Russian military base in *Kyrgyzstan* in July 2009.

Kazakhstan maintained close military and political relations with Russia. Besides that, it took into consideration China’s negative attitude to the American presence in the region. However, according to the American press, *Kazakhstan*’s leadership offered the United States to deploy its military bases on the *Kazakhstani* territory. Washington made no use of the offer referring to lack of military necessity. Press commentaries mentioned disagreement among the *Kazakhstani* leaders on the issue of stationing American military forces in the country and China’s pressure on *Kazakhstan* with the aim of preventing Astana from deepening cooperation with the USA.

Nonetheless, American troops got the right of passage across the air space of *Kazakhstan* and a guaranteed railroad transit through its territory for liaising with the American

bases in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. Besides that, the American Air Force had the right of landing at the Almaty airport in an emergency.

Turkmenistan agreed to open its air space to American aircraft and overland transportation channels exclusively for transporting humanitarian cargo to Afghanistan.

The Central Asian countries provided the United States with a considerable, all-round and often informal assistance in arranging an offensive on Kabul by the Northern Alliance units, the backbone of which consisted of Afghan Tajiks and Uzbeks. It was practical assistance, without which the operation of driving the Taliban out of the country could have produced entirely different results. Aware of this fact, the American administration began to treat relations with the Central Asian countries more seriously and look for ways of consolidating its presence there on a long-term basis.

US War against Iraq and Its Impact on the Situation in Central Asia

The political and ideological atmosphere, which accompanied the USA's preparation for the war against Iraq in March 2003, worried the Governments of the Central Asian countries. They did not sympathize with S. Hussein's regime but regarded the USA's and Britain's attack as arbitrary interference of Western countries in the affairs of an Asian country undertaken without sufficient legal and political grounds. Rumors began to spread across the region stating that the Bush Administration, in a similar manner, might wish to invade some other Asian states whose policy Washington would interpret as contradicting American interests. The US military presence in Afghanistan made such scenarios technically feasible.

The elites of the Central Asian nations began to perceive the American policy as the desire to retain its strategic gains in Central Asia without binding itself with any specific commitments on ensuring stability in the smaller Central Asian countries. There was growing dissatisfaction with the American version of the Afghan settlement, under which specialization of

Afghanistan’s economy in the production of drugs retained its semi-recognized status for an indefinite period of time.

The USA’s inability to achieve a political settlement in Afghanistan and Iraq occupied by American troops raised doubts about the adequacy of its foreign policy. Washington’s actions in Afghanistan increased a possibility that instability in Afghanistan might spread to the neighboring countries.

In 2004–2005, some changes began to show in Uzbekistan’s foreign policy. Tashkent became convinced that the deployment of US bases in the territory of Uzbekistan had not secured it a higher priority in the American policy. The culmination of Tashkent’s pro-American activity was its almost demonstrative support of the USA’s and Britain’s invasion of Iraq in 2003. Russia and China had cautiously distanced themselves from Washington. The leaders of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan marked time. Uzbekistan alone thought it important to voice its solidarity with the USA.

The Uzbek leadership was all the more depressed about the “ingratitude” of the American Administration during the events in the Uzbek city of Andizhan in the spring of 2005. At that time, the Tulip Revolution was taking place in Kyrgyzstan. The anti-government actions of the Kyrgyzs the West obviously sympathized with stimulated opposition feelings in the neighboring Uzbek areas. On May 12 and 13, 2005, anti-government events took place in Andizhan, which were suppressed by force by the Uzbek authorities. Washington came out with sharp accusations of the Government of Uzbekistan blaming it for human rights abuse. The Uzbek-American relations cooled down sharply. In July 2005, Uzbekistan demanded the closure of the American base in Khanabad, and American servicemen left it as early as in November 2005.

It did not mean that Tashkent had given up its maneuvering between the USA, Russia and China. The Uzbek leadership rather wished to demonstrate to Washington its determination to act boldly and find alternatives to its orientation towards the USA. Anyway, the events of the mid-2000s impelled Uzbekistan to approach Russia and the PRC.

The cooling of relations with Tashkent hardly discouraged American diplomacy although it did complicate its work in the

region. In an attempt to compensate for the “loss of Uzbekistan”, the USA started paying more attention to Kazakhstan believing that the country would be a suitable partner at least in energy projects. The United States was also able to retain its influence on Dushanbe. The American-Kyrgyz relations remained stable as well. Anyway, the USA retained its base in Kyrgyzstan as a possibility of its military presence although the rental payment for the use of the relevant facilities was raised sharply.

While observing the involvement of the smaller countries in cooperation within the SCO where the PRC and Russia had retained the leading positions the American leadership designed a new version of its regional policy in 2005–2006. The USA set forth the task of laying the ground for reorientation of the Central Asian countries in addressing security issues from cooperation with Russia and China towards cooperation with the South Asian states, of which India and Pakistan were supposed to be bound by allied relations with Washington. *In its operational records, the US Department of State began to treat the Central Asian countries as a single political area with the South Asian states.*

Broader American-Indian relations and Washington’s partnership with Pakistan were supposed to provide a political foundation for such American policy, although the latter was experiencing difficulties because of the chronic instability in that country. *The channeling of interests of the smaller countries in the Southern direction and their involvement in military and political cooperation with the system of the US strategic presence in South Asia were intended to create an alternative to Russian and Chinese regional cooperation projects.*

Despite suspension of the growth of American influence in Central Asia in 2003–2006, the USA continued to look for ways of consolidating its positions in the regional subsystem. The United States however could not yet really claim dominance in regional relations. Therefore objectively Washington’s policy gave the Central Asian countries some additional possibilities for diversifying external contacts and maneuvering. But at the same time, the American policy prevented those countries from establishing regional economic cooperation and security insti-

tutions based on cooperation of the smaller countries with the PRC and Russia.

Some prerequisites for competition between major powers emerged in Central Asia. *Competition was unfolding between two multilateral cooperation versions. The “Northern” one orientated towards integration around the SCO, which the USA could join in principle under some favorable circumstances, and the “Southern” one, which could theoretically be based on the US-Indian cooperation mechanism that the Central Asian countries could join in case of stabilization of the situation in Afghanistan and Pakistan.*

Regional Implications of the “Tulip Revolution” in Kyrgyzstan

The issue of the USA’s involvement in the SCO cooperation mechanisms as an observer was discussed in the United States in 2003–2004 with interest although not demonstratively. American diplomacy did not exclude such a turn of events. The situation changed after the 2005 events in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan.

By that time, liberal quarters among the American experts on the former Soviet Union countries had formed an opinion about a possibility of “pushing” political processes in the CIS member-states including the Russian Federation into the channel of “liberal revolutions”. It was assumed that in this way it would be possible to remove the “remaining Soviet functionaries” and speed up the establishment of openly pro-Western regimes, similar to those that emerged in Poland and the Czech Republic in the early 1990s, in the newly-independent states. Scenarios of such overthrows were implemented in Georgia (2003–2004) and Ukraine (2004).

Their “liberal revolutions” were based on protest actions of citizens of the relevant countries. In that sense, those “liberal revolutions” were a result of their internal development. However, Western countries, via a network of diverse non-governmental organizations established in the CIS countries in the 1990s on the funds of Western benefactors, were providing

financial, logistical, information, methodological and other support to opposition forces. That fact gave strong reasons to believe that those “colored revolutions” were encouraged and guided by the West.

After the “Orange Revolution” in Ukraine and the “Rose Revolution” in Georgia, “color revolutions” were expected in Central Asia. A liberal overthrow seemed most probable in Kyrgyzstan. After the spring 2002 events in connection with the recession of a part of Kyrgyz borderline territories to China (see Chapter 5), the situation in Kyrgyzstan remained tense.

The socioeconomic situation in the country was complicated. President A. Akaev’s authority was falling, primarily in Southern regions – Osh and Jalal-Abad provinces. In an attempt to strengthen their positions, the central authorities tried to strip of power the leaders of Southern regional clans who came out against the Government most actively.

A Cabinet reshuffle resulted in concentration of control over public property in the hands of a narrow circle of persons close to the President and his family members. The approximate balance of regional representation that had existed in the capital was upset.

Political climate in Kyrgyzstan rather liberal by the Central Asian standards was conducive to a relative freedom of expression and independent activity of citizens that had grown stronger under President A. Akaev. There were a lot of non-governmental organizations and mass media not controlled by the Government, and dissidents were not persecuted. Conditions for the opposition’s activity were favorable. Criticism of the President’s actions was growing fast. New protest groups began to be formed. The capital was full of leaflets calling for a change of Government.

The situation was all the more favorable for the opposition since in 2002–2004 a constitutional reform was carried out, which restricted the President’s powers by delegating some of them to the Parliament. The reform stipulated for the establishment of a one-chamber Parliament instead of the two-chamber Parliament that had existed before. The new Parliament was to be composed of 75 deputies elected in single-member constituencies. Elections from party lists were abolished.

On January 13, 2003, A. Akaev announced a referendum to be held on constitutional amendments and confirmation the President's powers until the end of its office, i.e. December 2005. The referendum was scheduled for February 2, 2003. As few as three weeks remained for its preparation, and this fact annoyed the opposition, which expressed its protest. Officials of the OSCE in Bishkek, through carelessness or intentionally, supported the viewpoint of the opposition, which sensed the approval of the West and intensified its activity.

The referendum nonetheless was held. According to the official data, the voter turnout was 86%. Of this number, 75.5% voted for amendments and 78.7% voted for reconfirming A. Akaev's powers. The opposition stepped back but did not give up; it began to prepare for the spring 2005 parliamentary election.

The opposition forces tried to unite. In September 2004, a coalition "The Popular Movement of Kyrgyzstan" was formed and headed by the country's former Prime Minister K. Bakiev. In December 2004, the former Foreign Minister R. Otunbaeva founded a party called "Ata-Zhurt" ("Fatherland"). That party and the Popular Movement of Kyrgyzstan agreed to cooperate. One of the most authoritative opposition leaders F. Kulov sentenced in 2001 to a seven-year term in prison on charges of abuse of power remained outside of the opposition. The opposition suspected that the President would break his promise to hold presidential elections in October 2005 and retire.

Since the new system of parliamentary elections provided for election in regional constituencies, the candidates' clannish and kindred relations assumed great importance. Losing candidates received more possibilities for mobilizing their fellow towns-folk or fellow-villagers for protest against the results of the poll. Competition for the seats became more intense due to a reduction in their number.

The election campaign was marked by violations such as withdrawal of opposition candidates, bribery of voters and creation of obstacles to the functioning of the opposition mass media. On February 27, 2005, the first round of elections was held without breach of peace but only 31 of the 75 candidates were elected, mostly loyal to A. Akaev. Criticizing the election

campaign, the OSCE mission concluded that the elections themselves were more equitable than in the previous years. Nonetheless, the opposition did not agree with the results of the poll and started to establish parallel bodies of authority in locales. On March 4 supporters of Yu. Bakiev, brother of the opposition leader, seized the provincial administration building in Jalal-Abad.

The second tour of elections held on March 13 provoked a series of mass acts of protest in the provinces. Opposition candidates started to mobilize their clans and relatives. On March 14, supporters of unsuccessful opposition candidates seized the district administration building in the town of Uzgen (Osh Province) and the provincial administration building in Talas.

On March 15, opposition leaders established the National Unity Coordination Council in Jalal-Abad and demanded another parliamentary election and Akaev's resignation. On March 18, they seized the provincial administration building in the city of Osh. The attempt of the security and law enforcement agencies to resume control of the administrative buildings led to mass riots, attacks on police posts and complete loss of Government control over Southern provinces.

To a large extent, acts of protest were spontaneous: people reacted to their hard life and the authorities' inability to improve the economic situation. A substantial role in organizing unrest however was played by criminal groups particularly drug dealers interested in weakening the central authorities or pushing through their covert supporters into the central bodies of authority.

On March 24, the opposition organized a rally in the Ala-Too Square in the center of Bishkek; opposition supporters from various regions had arrived in the capital to attend it. The rally attended by about 15,000 people passed into an assault on the President's Administration building (the "White House"). Law enforcement forces were ordered to abstain from using arms. The "White House" and the public television building were seized by the participants in the rally without any resistance. Looting and disturbances initiated by provincial residents who had arrived in the capital started in Bishkek. F. Kulov, released

from prison, assumed the duties of the Minister of Interior and was able to stop the riot.

A. Akaev’s supporters did not make any attempts to change the course of events. The President himself as well as members of his family and his inner circle left the country without waiting for the assault on the “White House”. On April 4, A. Akaev passed his letter of resignation to Parliament.

Despite their initial demand of holding another parliamentary election, opposition leaders recognized the powers of the elected Parliament, where supporters of the deposed President had rather strong positions. At that time, only the Parliament was constitutionally legitimate. Its deputies displayed sufficient sense of responsibility in passing the decision on appointing K. Bakiev Prime Minister and Acting President. The leaders of the opposition movement A. Beknazarov, R. Otunbaeva and O. Tekebaev were appointed Prosecutor General, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Speaker respectively. Posts in the new Administration were mostly given to those people who had previously occupied high positions in the power structure.

In May 2005, K. Bakiev and F. Kulov whose sentence had been reversed by the Supreme Court reached agreement on the formation of a coalition. F. Kulov refused to run for the post of the President and gave his support to K. Bakiev who, in his turn, promised to appoint F. Kulov Prime Minister. On July 10, K. Bakiev was elected President on the strength of 88.6% of votes. The K. Bakiev – F. Kulov coalition implemented their agreement on the division of power between the Southern and the Northern clans, of which K. Bakiev represented the Southern ones. Parity between the regional groups was restored, although with the predominance of Southerners this time.

The role of nongovernmental organizations and the mass media in the Kyrgyz events was less prominent than in the other “color” revolutions. Basically, the Kyrgyz revolution had nothing to do with foreign sponsors, and probably for that reason no reorientation of the foreign political course occurred with the advent of the new leadership.

A number of analysts believed that change of power in the country was unexpected both for Russia and China and the USA. In the very first days of the “Tulip Revolution”, Moscow

and Washington took a wait-and-see attitude. When A. Akaev's deposition became an established fact, Russia and the USA expressed their readiness to cooperate with the new authorities.

In response to the events in Kyrgyzstan, China closed down its border with that country and arranged an evacuation of Chinese businessmen from the Kyrgyz territory in order to protect them from violence. Beijing's apprehension was all the stronger since some opposition leaders were known as organizers of protest against the recession of a part of the Kyrgyz territory to China in 2001.

The leaderships of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan were worried about the Kyrgyz events. But not a single neighboring country offered help to A. Akaev. True, he did not ask any. To the leaders of some countries, the "Tulip Revolution" served as a proof of danger that originated from the deposed Kyrgyz President's tolerant attitude to the opposition. Mistrust of the local NGOs increased because their connections with foreign sponsors gave cause for the statesmen to think of them as agents of foreign states.

The downfall of A. Akaev's Government did not settle the sociopolitical crisis in Kyrgyzstan; it only made it less acute. The economic growth rate remained low, criminalization of business went on, political assassinations and corruption scandals occurred as before. Those dissatisfied tried to protest from time to time and seized administrative buildings and land. A new opposition formed in the country, and it demanded, as the previous one, more political reforms, resignation of the President and transformation of the state from a presidential republic into a parliamentary one.

The new opposition that formed around the "Movement for Reforms" was headed by O. Tekebaev who resigned from the post of the Speaker in February 2006. A. Beknazarov and R. Otunbaeva had left their posts as well and joined the opposition. On November 2, 2006, the opposition launched a permanent rally in the center of Bishkek enforcing their demands. On November 6, President Bakiev submitted a new draft constitution to the Parliament, which was approved on November 8. The right of appointing the Prime Minister and approving the Cabinet members went over to the Parliament. The President's scope of

authority was reduced while the number of Parliament members was increased, and half of them were to run on party tickets. The country was being transformed into a parliamentary republic.

The new Constitution was adopted hastily under the pressure of public protest. It turned out to contain several legally ambiguous provisions concerning the President’s relationship with the Parliament. A new round of confrontation between the President and the Government on the one part and the opposition on the other part ensued. The old Parliament proved incapable of coping with the broader scope of its authority.

On December 19, 2006, F. Kulov’s Government resigned. The right of forming a new Cabinet was supposed to go over to the leader of the leading Parliamentary faction. But all the deputies had been elected under a majoritarian electoral system. It was not clear how the quorum should be rated: either based on the normative number of 90 deputies as was the case in December 2005 or based on the number of 75 deputies as was required by law when the Parliament was elected in March.

The Constitutional Court capable of interpreting the fundamental law had not been formed.

On December 30, 2006, the Kyrgyz Parliament approved new amendments to the Constitution. That time they were aimed at returning some of the powers to the President, which he had had to delegate to the Parliament shortly before. Prior to 2010, the President had obtained the right to appoint the Prime Minister with the Parliament’s consent and members of Government upon Prime Minister’s recommendation. The Movement for Reform refused to accept these innovations and continued its opposition activity.

April 7, 2010 Events and Change of Power in Kyrgyzstan

In the second half of the 2000s, President K. Bakiev and his milieu made an attempt to modify the country’s political system so as to ensure further concentration of power and property in the hands of the President, his family members and his closest associates. As a result of the Parliamentary elections held in

December 2007, 71 of the 90 seats in Parliament (Zhogorku Kenesh) went to the President's party "Ak Zhol". In July 2009, K. Bakiev was reelected for another term in office having received, according to the official data, 76% of votes with a turnout of 79%.

After the reelection, the President's milieu started acting more resolutely, with Maxim Bakiev, the President's youngest son, coming to the fore. In October 2009, he headed the Central Agency for Development, Investment and Innovation set up under a President's decree and charged with the implementation of infrastructure projects and economic development programs. The MGN Asset Management Company headed by M. Bakiev's close associate, assumed management of the Development Fund of Kyrgyzstan. In February 2010, Kyrgyztelekom and Severelektro Company supplying Bishkek and the country's Northern areas with electricity were privatized and transferred to the possession of members of Bakiev Jr's clan under cost.

President K. Bakiev proposed amendments to the Constitution concerning the procedure of the transfer of power in the country in the event that the acting Head of State proved incapable of discharging his functions. The point was that the person assuming the President's functions could retain his powers for rather a long period of time without holding snap presidential elections. The Kyrgyz society interpreted that step as an attempt to lay the groundwork for the transfer of power from K. Bakiev to his son without taking into consideration voters' opinion.

The Government's unpopular actions were undertaken against the background of a grave economic and sociopolitical situation in Kyrgyzstan. In the early 2000s, no economic upturn occurred in the country as opposed to Russia, Ukraine and Kazakhstan. The population remained extremely poor. The main industries were in a deplorable state. That forced the population to rely on subsistence farming and therefore made it extremely sensitive to the issue of ownership of fertile land that was in short supply.

The state authority was as ineffective as before. The political elite stuck to their clannish and regional interests. Corruption was a norm in political and economic life. The authorities controlled both the legislative and the judiciary branches and exert-

ed pressure on the mass media. The latter circumstance was taken by the public especially painfully because under President A. Akaev, despite all his drawbacks, political environment in Kyrgyzstan was rather liberal by the Central Asian standards. Anyway, there was a possibility for a legal and peaceful display of protest, although it resulted in the deposition of President Akaev', who had since lived in emigration in Russia.

K. Bakiev's foreign policy was marked by a more or less cautious maneuvering between Russia, Western countries and China, with overall priority being attached to relations with Moscow. The Russian leadership was not quite fully satisfied with its relationship with Kyrgyzstan, although it did not consider K. Bakiev's Government the "worst of all possible" governments.

In February 2009, K. Bakiev, referring to unsatisfactory conditions of the relevant agreement with the USA, announced his intension to close down the American base at Manas. In July, it was reorganized into the Transit Traffic Center. Shortly after, however, Kyrgyzstan and the USA signed another agreement, according to which the American side had to pay a much higher rental for using facilities in the Kyrgyz territory. As a result, no changes unfavorable for the US presence in Kyrgyzstan actually occurred.

At the same time, in the opinion of the press, the Kyrgyz side was procrastinating negotiations with Russia about the establishment of another Russian base in Kyrgyzstan. There were also some financial and economic difficulties. Bishkek broke its agreement with Moscow on the transfer of 48% of shares of the Kyrgyz enterprise "Dastan", which produced torpedoes and the appropriate equipment, to Russia in exchange for writing off a part of the Kyrgyz debt. In response, Russia began to postpone the granting of lax credits to Kyrgyzstan for the construction of the Kambarata hydropower plant promised to it in February 2009.

Early in 2010, anti-government feelings were inspired by a double rise in electricity and heating tariffs. In 2005, the center of the protest was the South of the country, while in 2010 the key role was played by the Northern opposition. Thus, the sociopolitical protest was obviously tinted by regional contradictions and dissatisfaction of some of the Kyrgyz regions with

the distribution of key government posts in the capital between Southerners and Northerners.

Starting with the end of February 2010, mass rallies of protest began in the town of Naryn where demands were advanced to cancel the new tariffs and address a number of local social problems. The participants in the Rally expressed their dissatisfaction with the rule of the President's family and privatization of power generation enterprises. The rallies were attended by the leaders of opposition parties. On March 17, opposition forces held a kurultai (congress) where they established a consultative and coordinating body – the Central Executive Committee (CEC).

On April 6, Deputy Chairman of the opposition party “Ata-Meken” B. Sherniyazov was detained in Talas. Several hundreds of his supporters seized the building of the provincial administration and the police department by storm and demanded that Sherniyazov be released. The authorities' attempt to suppress the disturbances in Talas by force failed. Detention of opposition leaders in Bishkek on the night between April 6 and 7 provoked a fast spread of the riot to the country's capital. On April 7, crowds of demonstrators in Bishkek who had managed to obtain arms (thanks to the inaction of the police) took the buildings of Parliament, the General Prosecutor's Office, the State Television and Radio Broadcasting Company and, finally, the residence of the President and the Government by storm.

In the course of clashes with the police and the State Safeguard Service headed by the President's brother Zh. Bakiev 85 people were killed. The disturbances were accompanied by mass looting and plunder of shopping centers, marketplaces and museums as well as violence and seizure of private houses in the suburbs of the capital.

In the evening of April 7, the Kyrgyz Prime Minister announced his resignation and devolution of authority to the Provisional Government formed on the basis of the CEC. K Bakiev with his family and closest associates left Bishkek for his native village of Teyit (Jalal-Abad Province). Simultaneously, a wave of rallies spread across provincial centers where governors appointed by K. Bakiev began to resign ceding their powers to representatives of the opposition.

The Provisional Government – a coalition of opposition political forces – was headed by R. Otunbaeva, head of the Parliamentary faction of the Social-Democratic Party, who had occupied the post of the country’s Foreign Minister several times (including directly after the 2005 “revolution”). A. Atambaev, the leader of the Social-Democratic Party, became her First Deputy while O. Tekebaev, a former Parliament Chairman and the leader of the “Ata Meken” Party, A. Beknazarov, a former Prosecutor General, and T. Sariev, the leader of the “Akshumkar” Party, were appointed her Deputies.

The Provisional Government dissolved the Parliament and the Constitutional Court, abolished the State Safeguard Service and the Central Agency for Development, Investment and Innovation, cancelled privatization of Severelektro and Kyrgyztelekom, and imposed a moratorium on the real estate and movable property transactions conducted from March 2005 through April 2010.

K. Bakiev’s attempt to arrange resistance to the new authorities in the South of Kyrgyzstan where he came from failed – local population did not support him. On April 15, a plane of the Kazakhstani Air Force took K. Bakiev and his family to Kazakhstan from where the President sent a fax message to the Provisional Government announcing his resignation from the post of the President. Thereupon K. Bakiev moved to Belarus. Finding himself in security, he made a statement to the effect that he considered his resignation illegitimate. At the same time, it was mentioned that he had no desire to return to Kyrgyzstan.

Acts of violence and mass seizure of land and houses owned by Russians and Meskhetian Turks started in Bishkek suburbs after the coup. That seizure was accompanied by bloodshed and murder. Security and law enforcement forces succeeded in putting an end to plunder and other unlawful actions only a few days later.

The Provisional Government published a new draft Constitution of Kyrgyzstan stipulating for the introduction of the parliamentary form of government. A constitutional conference composed of prominent public figures was convened to discuss it. A referendum on the new draft of the fundamental law is scheduled for June 27, 2010, and parliamentary elections are scheduled for October 10.

In response to the events in Bishkek, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan closed down their borders with Kyrgyzstan for several weeks. Both N. Nazarbaev and I. Karimov gave a negative assessment of the events in Kyrgyzstan and stressed that the situation in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan was much better than that in Kyrgyzstan. At the same time, not a single leader of a Central Asian country expressed solidarity with K. Bakiev. Moreover, the neighboring countries did not even wish to provide K. Bakiev with a plane to leave the country. China declared its non-interference in the Kyrgyz events and confined itself to expressing anxiety and readiness to cooperate with the new Kyrgyz leadership.

Russia reacted to the events in Kyrgyzstan with reserved sympathy. But the Russian side was, above all, worried about the destiny of Russian citizens and the country's population of Russian origin. On April 8, 2010, V. Putin spoke to R. Otunbaeva over the telephone about possible assistance to the new Kyrgyz authorities. When commenting on the events in Kyrgyzstan, the Russian leadership emphasized that full responsibility for what had happened rested with K. Bakiev himself. On April 14, the Russian Government decided to lend financial assistance to Kyrgyzstan and to provide it with the seeding material for field work. Moscow stated however that full-fledged economic cooperation between Russia and Kyrgyzstan was possible only after the formation of new legitimate Kyrgyz bodies of authority.

During the last months of K. Bakiev's government, the USA maintained active contacts with him to secure normal operation of the Center of Transit Traffic. After the reports about the April 7 coup, American representatives initially declared their intention to continue cooperation with the legitimate government. But on April 8, Washington called off American-Kyrgyz intergovernmental consultations although the President's son M. Bakiev had already arrived in the USA to participate in them. American representatives stated that they did not regard the change of government in Bishkek as a coup. On April 10, State Secretary H. Clinton spoke to R. Otunbaeva over the telephone. During the conversation, the intension of the new Kyrgyz leadership to abide by the agreements on the Center of Transit Traffic was declared.

On April 14, the Presidents of the USA, Russia and Kazakhstan discussed the situation in Kyrgyzstan during their meeting held in the lobby of the nuclear security summit in Washington. It was decided to take measures and prevent transformation of the conflict into a large-scale confrontation between the North and the South in Kyrgyzstan. The Russian and the Kazakhstani leaders exerted concerted pressure on K. Bakiev and the Provisional Government to persuade them to reach a compromise. As a result, the new authorities did not prevent K. Bakiev from leaving the country, and the latter, in response, submitted an official resignation. The situation in Kyrgyzstan remained unstable. The Provisional Government was unable to exercise full control over the Southern regions – Jalal-Abad and Osh provinces.

Aggravation of the South Fergana Conflict (Events in Andizhan)

The events in Kyrgyzstan subject to active influence from the leaders of the country's shadow economy including those connected with the drug trafficking induced a new outbreak of instability in the Uzbek part of the Fergana Valley. That part of the region was the most densely populated area in Central Asia. Poverty and overpopulation, a high birth rate, mass unemployment and a shortage of land led a permanent presence of a large number of young men not engaged in any productive activity in Fergana. It was them who primarily took part in antigovernment actions because they were dissatisfied with lack of a possibility to apply their abilities in some legitimate and well-paid jobs.

The division of the Fergana Valley by state borders aggravated the situation and introduced additional difficulties into people's life preventing trade and movement of people from one part of the valley that belonged to Uzbekistan into another that belonged to Kyrgyzstan or Tajikistan. Extremist groups and sects instigated dissatisfaction and interethnic discord.

In 1989, a wave of violence against Meskhetian Turks deported to Uzbekistan from Georgia in Soviet time spread across the Uzbek part of the valley. In 1990, clashes between

Kyrgyzs and Uzbeks took place in the Kyrgyz cities of Osh and Uzgen. In 1991, an antigovernment mutiny was arranged in the city of Namangan by the Uzbek religious group “Adolat”.

In 1996-1998, a series of antigovernment actions and an attempt at power seizure by the military led by Colonel M. Khudoiberdyev took place in Leninabad (later Sogdian) Province of Tajikistan. He was an Uzbek by nationality, and the Tajik authorities suspected that the mutiny was inspired from Uzbekistan with the aim of annexing Leninabad Province from Tajikistan.

In August 1999, units of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan based in the Karata Valley of Tajikistan invaded the territory of Kyrgyzstan in the town of Batken. A year later IMU units invaded the Kyrgyzstani territory again as well as Surkhandarya Province of Uzbekistan.

In the spring of 2005, the situation in the Fergana Valley aggravated once again. As soon as it became known that the Kyrgyz part of the Fergana Valley (Jalal-Abad, Uzgen and Osh) stopped obeying the central Kyrgyz Government in Bishkek, religious extremists who filled the Fergana Valley started speaking of establishing a united “Fergana Caliphate”. To implement this idea, extremists in the Uzbek part of Fergana began to plan seizure of power in locales in the same way as it was done in Kyrgyzstan. It was decided to deliver the main blow on Andizhan, the fourth largest city of Uzbekistan situated in the South-Eastern part of the valley 40 km off the Uzbek-Kyrgyz border.

There are several versions explaining the Andizhan events. According to the Uzbek authorities, the mutiny was arranged by the Islamic group “Akromiya” supported from abroad. On the night from May 12 to 13, 2005, armed group members seized the city prison where 23 group members earlier arrested on charges of extremism were jailed.

Having released several hundred inmates and using part of them as a human shield, the rebels tried to seize the building of the provincial department of the National Security Service of Uzbekistan. The attempt failed. However, the rebels managed to seize the provincial administration building.

On May 13, a crowd of people excited with the events gathered in the square in front of the administration building.

Ordinary people found it hard to grasp the situation. The only thing obvious to them was that the local authorities were frightened, and therefore demands could be made on them. Among the participants in the rally there were deliberate adversaries of the Government as well as relatives of those who had been arrested for their contacts with local drug dealers. And finally, there were a lot of simply curious people in the crowd. The rebels used the crowd as a cover in their confrontation with the government forces.

On the evening of May 13, reinforcement was sent from Tashkent to suppress the mutiny. Government troops resumed control of the administration building. Akromiya group members fled to the Kyrgyz part of the Fergana Valley to seek protection of Kyrgyz opposition members who still held power there. But on May 14 through 19, disturbances similar to those in Andizhan flared up in the Uzbek town of Kara-Su situated close to the Kyrgyz border. Government troops suppressed that riot as well.

According to the official data, 187 people, predominantly rebels and servicemen of government forces, died in the course of the Andizhan events. In November 2005, 15 organizers of the Andizhan disturbances including three citizens of Kyrgyzstan were sentenced by the Supreme Court of Uzbekistan to long terms of imprisonment. In October 2006, President I. Karimov removed the Governor of Andizhan Province from his post having admitted that the events in Andizhan were associated with the grave socioeconomic conditions of people's life and mistakes made by the Province's leaders.

According to Western analysts, the events in Andizhan were caused by the arrest of 23 businessmen (and not extremists) on baseless charges. Supporters of this version maintain that those arrested had administered charity and that was why the population sympathized with them. Western analysts doubted that those arrested were connected with "Akromiya" and that there were good reasons for reckoning that organization among extremist ones.

According to this version, the city prison was seized by relatives and friends of the accused who had lost any hope of justice. According to this version, a crowd of unarmed people gath-

ered in front of the provincial administration building expressing their indignation with the grave socioeconomic situation and arbitrariness of the local government. People waited for President I. Karimov to arrive hoping for a dialogue with him. Instead, government troops used strength against civilian population disproportionately and not selectively. The number of those dead was quoted to reach from 750 to 1,500 people.

The disturbances in Andizhan exposed serious economic and sociopolitical problems. In an attempt to take the situation under control, the Uzbek Government proved that it was capable of resorting to force without hesitation. The Andizhan events led to an aggravation of the Uzbek-American relations. The United States and the EU countries did not recognize the official version of the Andizhan events and demanded an international investigation, which Uzbekistan rejected. Russia and China expressed solidarity with the Government of Uzbekistan and supported basically its interpretation of the events.

The governments of all Central Asian countries supported the actions of the Uzbek authorities. At the same time, following Washington's desire, Kyrgyzstan refused to extradite the defectors from Andizhan to Uzbekistan, many of whom were accused of criminal offences, and permitted the UN High Commissioner for the Affairs of Refugees to take them from the Kyrgyz territory to third countries. That was followed by Tashkent's protest and a cooling of the Uzbek-Kyrgyz relations.

Policy of Development of Western Regions in the People's Republic of China and the Situation in the XUAR

In 2000, the Government of the PRC started to implement the Great Western China Development Strategy. The main reasons that impelled the Chinese Government to take the decision on accelerating the development of Western provinces were the increasing imbalances in China's regional development. The central and Western regions of the PRC lagged behind the Eastern and the seaside ones. That was fraught with increasing dissatisfaction of the population of those backward parts of the

country. In Xinjiang, the situation threatened to be aggravated by the separatism of local residents and could prepare the ground for a political outburst. At the same time, the efforts of the central Government to modernize Xinjiang were perceived by its Nehan population as another wave of Chinazation.

The situation in the XUAR had never been calm. In the 1990s, the Region was swept by a wave of terrorist acts. From 1990 through 2001, over 200 of them were registered. The Beijing authorities hoped that a rise in the population’s living standards in the national districts would undermine the social base of separatism, and the inflow of human resources from other provinces will “dilute” its ethno-social base.

The adoption of the plan of “Large-Scale Development of the West” was preceded by a “strike hard” campaign launched by the central authorities in 1996. Its objective was to fight separatism and religious extremism in the XUAR. Restrictions were imposed on the functioning of mosques and madrasahs; among other things, minors were forbidden to visit the mosque, and instruction in the Uygur language at the Xinjiang University was curtailed. In 1997, the authorities suppressed mass disturbances in Kulja ferociously.

The decision on the development of Western regions was adopted by the PRC State Council in January 2000. The plan applied to six provinces (Sichuan, Huizhou, Yunnan, Shaanxi, Gansu and Qinghai), five autonomous regions (Xinjiang-Uygur, Ningxia, Tibetan, Inner Mongolia and Guangxi) and the city of central subordination Chongqing.

The plan was supposed to be implemented in three phases. It was decided to focus in 2001–2010 on developing the transportation infrastructure, communication networks and irrigation systems, streamlining agricultural production and industry, and accelerating the training of specialists in order to improve the quality of labor resources in the region. The period of 2011–2030 was to be devoted to industrial modernization, and in 2031–2050 it was planned to establish modern scientific and engineering facilities in the region.

In February 2007, the PRC State Council passed a resolution on measures aimed at doubling the per capita GDP share in Xinjiang against 2000. The Government was trying to bridge the

widening gap in the living standards of the Xinjiang population and residents of more developed PRC provinces. The task was set forth to provide the poor population with clothing and foodstuffs.

Four hundred billion yuans (\$48 billion) were invested in the economy of China's Western regions. In that part of the country, the economic growth rate rose from 7.3% in the mid-1990s to 12% in the mid-2000s. The stretch of highways grew. The living standards improved slightly. However, the gap between the Eastern and the Western regions continued to increase. Nonetheless, separatist activity in the XUAR was reduced thanks to systematic pressure and socioeconomic transformations in the region.

In 2000, Xinjiang was populated by 8.6 million Uyghurs (45.2% of the population), along with 2.75 million representatives of other ethnic minorities (Kazakh, Kyrgyz and Hui) and 7.7 million ethnic Chinese (Han Chinese) (40.6%). In 1969, Han Chinese constituted 6.7% of the Xinjiang population while Uyghurs accounted for 76%. The geographic distribution of newcomers changed. In the middle of the 20th century, the newly arrived Han Chinese settled down predominantly in the North of the XUAR, while in the 2000s, especially after the construction of a railroad to Kashgar, they began to settle down in Southern oases where Uyghurs had formerly prevailed.

The Han Chinese are concentrated in cities where the living standards are higher than in rural areas. They dominate among the high-paid employees and businessmen as well as among the functionaries of the Chinese Communist Party. The Chinese population prefers to work in industry (especially in oil and gas extraction), transport, construction, communications, science and cotton production.

The majority of Uyghurs live in rural areas. About one fourth of them are illiterate. Representatives of ethnic minorities constitute the greater part of the unemployed in the XUAR. Kazakhs, the third largest ethnic groups in the region (1.3 million) are in a worse economic position than Uyghurs.

In July 2009, clashes between Uyghurs and Chinese flared up in Urumqi. Disturbances continued for several days and were mercilessly suppressed by government troops. According to official information, 184 people including 137 Chinese and

46 Uygurs died. According to Uygur organizations, the number of victims among Uygurs exceeded 800. Beijing accused the World Congress of Uygurs, with its headquarters in Munich, of organizing the disturbances.

Russian-Chinese Cooperation in Regional Affairs

Chinese and Russian diplomats sensed the increasing mistrust of Washington on the part of the smaller countries associated with the US interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq. Both states tried to use this trend for strengthening the existing regional cooperation mechanisms.

After the signing of the Russian-Chinese Treaty of Good-Neighborliness and Cooperation in July 2001, Moscow and Beijing found themselves in a rather original relationship characterized by a mixture of political and diplomatic partnership, a substantial component of military-technical cooperation and semi-concealed competition for influence on regional politics. Bilateral economic relations were important to both powers but China's and Russia's interests in economic cooperation with each other were sharply asymmetrical. Russia still valued the possibility of exporting Russian-made armaments and some dual-use technologies to China. Russian politicians did not think it was potentially dangerous although the technological gap between Russia and China significantly decreased in the 1990s and the 2000s as well as the reserve of Russian military technological advantages over the PRC.

Beijing appreciated its economic relations with Russia primarily because they provided China with access to an affordable foreign source of military technological innovations. All China's economic interests outside of this framework were connected with the desire to obtain cheap raw materials such as timber and iron ore, and in the longer term – energy in the form of oil and gas delivered from the Siberian deposits of the Russian Federation.

However, financial indicators of China's economic relationship with Russia were many times lower than those of trade and economic relations between the PRC and the USA. Russia occu-

pied a modest place in the system of Chinese international economic interests in that regard.

However, Central Asia was a region where Russian and Chinese interests converged and permitted both countries to count on deeper cooperation. Using the SCO mechanism and bilateral relations with the Central Asian countries, Russia and China began to take measures to prevent a political vacuum in the region that the United States could fill.

Having sensed an upsurge of American-Uzbek contradictions, Moscow and Beijing started to assist Uzbekistan in reorienting its policy towards cooperation with them. Despite the outbreak of instability in Kyrgyzstan in 2005, Russia's and China's relations with it remained constructive even after the change of government in Bishkek. Russian and Chinese influence on Kazakhstan and Tajikistan still exceeded that of the USA.

Russia and China came out in support of stability in Central Asia and did what they could to maintain internal political stability in the CA countries. Such logic of their foreign political conduct was to the liking of the smaller countries.

An important task for Russia and China was to rid the smaller countries of the political inferiority complex associated with the pressure that Western countries exerted on the Central Asian states criticizing them for their mistakes in political reforms. From the viewpoint of the academic community and political elites in the EU and the USA, the Central Asian countries could not and did not wish to develop in a democratic way and had a propensity for authoritarianism.

Western political and psychological pressure on the CA states doomed them to a position of those always "making excuses" to the EU countries and the USA. That "guilt complex" made it easier for Western countries to obtain political and economic concessions from the smaller countries, and in exchange for them the European countries and the United States of America agreed not to raise the issue of "moral" legitimacy of the political systems in the Central Asian states.

In the mid-2000s, 'illegitimacy of non-democratic regimes' served as a pretext for Washington to apply the "change-of-regime" strategy to them. That strategy had been developed during the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and the campaigns of

threats against Iran, North Korea and Libya. It was not surprising that the Central Asian governments received Western criticism with anxiety and were grateful to China and Russia for their efforts to prevent moral isolation of the CA countries in world affairs. Moscow and Beijing did not criticize the Central Asian countries for their domestic policy openly even when the actions of some of them gave some grounds for censure (Turkmenistan under S. Niyazov, and partly Uzbekistan).

At the same time, the deepening of Russian-Chinese cooperation in Central Asia met with certain constraints. It was not without some apprehension that Russia witnessed the signs of China’s increasing military and political role in the region. Moscow was anxious about the discussion of prospects of the establishment of Chinese military bases in Central Asia. For that reason, Russia was suspicious about China’s proposal on building up the military component of cooperation within the SCO framework. In the course of their dialogue with the USA, Chinese representatives presented the situation in such a way as if it were Russia who initiated acceleration of military and political cooperation among the countries of that organization.

Moscow was cautious about the Chinese initiative of establishing a free trade area within the SCO because that idea competed with the prospects of establishing such an area within the EurAsEC. And finally, the activity of Chinese diplomacy in establishing relations with local countries in the area of energy supply to China could in the long run lead to a competition between Russia and the PRC in oil and gas transportation from the Central Asian countries in the Eastern direction. Similar competition with regard to energy supply in the Western direction had already sprung up between Russia on one side and the USA and the EU on the other side. Moscow wanted no repetition of such experience.

Multilateral Cooperation within the SCO

The shift of the US foreign political activity to the Middle East after the start of the war in Iraq distracted the attention of American diplomacy from Central Asia. At the same time,

the example of Washington who had resorted to force in various parts of the globe at its own discretion induced the other countries to check their readiness in case of regional conflicts. It was important for China to display power and frighten Uygur separatists. Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan had similar reasons. It was desirable for Russia and China to be aware of the level of readiness of their partners for joint military operations in the region if the state of affairs required it. In August 2003, the first antiterrorist maneuvers of the SCO member-countries, which became regular later, were held in Kazakhstan and China.

At their meeting in the autumn of 2003, the Heads of Government of the SCO member-countries approved a long-term multilateral trade and economic cooperation program. It was designed for the period until 2020 and stipulated for the establishment of favorable conditions for a free movement of goods, capitals, technologies and services in the longer term. In January 2004, the SCO Secretariat was established in Beijing.

Asian states began to display a growing interest in that organization. In 2004, President H. Karzai of Afghanistan attended a SCO summit as a guest. That same year Mongolia received the status of an observer. In 2005, its example was followed by India, Pakistan and Iran. That same year a contact group on the SCO cooperation with Afghanistan was established. The SCO also discussed the issue of granting an observer's status to the United States. However, against the background of debates about the involvement of American citizens in the "color revolutions" in the CIS, chances of a positive outcome of that discussion were trifling.

The activity of American non-governmental organizations in the region irritated local countries. An expression of their feelings was the adoption, at a meeting of the SCO leaders in June 2005, of a resolution, which contained a proposal to the United States to 'decide about the final date of the temporary use of ... infrastructure facilities and stay of its military contingents in the territory of the SCO member-countries'.

Washington reacted to the demarche in a cool manner. American representatives referred to the fact that the issue of

the bases belonged to the area of bilateral relations of the USA with each of the CA countries and would be addressed accordingly. Then in July 2005, the Government of Uzbekistan decided to close down the American base in Khanabad. True, Kyrgyzstan took a more flexible attitude to the issue of American military presence.

The SCO was gradually assuming a position of the main organization for multilateral cooperation in the region. Its activity encompassed the areas of security, economic cooperation, transport and humanitarian assistance. At the same time, the SCO had no military organization. Cooperation among its member-states on security issues (including maneuvers) was developing on a limited scale. The SCO had no rapid deployment force or any other permanent multilateral contingents.

China was developing bilateral military and political cooperation with some countries. In 2002, Chinese-Kyrgyz antiterrorist maneuvers were held. The press also carried reports of the PRC's intention to establish a military base in the Kyrgyz territory. China cooperated with the CA countries in training military personnel as well as in the military-technical area and in the exchange of intelligence data.

Since 2003, military and political cooperation began to develop between local countries (primarily Tajikistan and Uzbekistan) and India. In August 2003, the first joint Indian-Tajik maneuvers were held in Tajikistan. All the states of the region participated in the NATO's Partnership for Peace Program, and Kazakhstan signed a Partnership Development Plan of Action with the NATO in January 2006.

On the whole, the CA countries maintain military and political cooperation simultaneously within the framework of the CSTO, the SCO and the NATO as well as an emerging network of bilateral contacts with Russia, China, the USA and India. Russia continues to dominate in the area of military and political cooperation with the smaller countries. A diversification of their cooperation mechanisms is however taking place. *Turkmenistan alone sticks to its principle of independent security protection.*

Relations with Russia within the System of International Priorities of the Smaller Countries

Relations between the Central Asian countries and Russia are notable for a changeable and contradictory mixture of centripetal and centrifugal trends. The former are based on the economic and humanitarian contacts and the transportation network inherited from the Soviet time as well as partially coinciding interests in the area of regional security. A growing interest in Russia returned thanks to the rehabilitation and expansion of possibilities of the Russian economy in the mid-2000s.

The centrifugal trends are fed by the desire of the smaller countries to diversify their foreign economic contacts and reduce their dependence on Russia, especially if curtailing of cooperation with it can be compensated by an expansion of contacts with the USA and the EU.

The trend towards further alliance development continued to prevail in the *Russian-Kazakhstani* relations. Kazakhstan remained Russia's key military and political partner, less powerful than China but much more close in the sense of similarity of security interests and vision of international realities.

It was with difficulty that Moscow accustomed itself to the thought that focusing on the attempts of cooperation with Ukraine and underestimating prospects of integration with Kazakhstan typical of it in the 1990s was unproductive. Later on the Russian leadership began to realize that Kazakhstan's diplomacy was not inclined to focus solely on relations with Russia. A new formula of Russian-Kazakhstani relations began to gradually take shape, in which priority of bilateral cooperation was rather painlessly combined with Kazakhstan's orientation towards selective diversification of its system of international partnerships including the one in the energy transportation area that could well be agreed with Moscow. The idea of geopolitical uniqueness of Russia's alliance with Kazakhstan was slowly taking root in the Russian cultural and political milieu.

In December 2004, the Treaty on Delimitation of the Russian-Kazakhstani Border was signed. Interstate economic cooperation, which included some economic integration elements, was deepening. Russia had strengthened its positions as Kazakhstan's lead-

ing foreign trade partner. And at that, 70% of the foreign trade turnover fell on direct borderline contacts between Russian and Kazakhstani regions. Russian investments in Kazakhstan amounted to \$1.3 billion (of the approximately \$30 billion of the accumulated foreign investment), which was less than Kazakhstan's investments in Russia equal to \$2.2 billion.

The two countries continued their cooperation in oil and gas extraction, and the bulk of Kazakhstan's oil and gas is exported via the Russian territory. The co-sharing of Russian and Kazakhstani companies in power-engineering projects in Kazakhstan is commensurate with the participation of the Russian capital.

The Kazakhstani Government however took measures to reserve the dominating positions of Western power companies in the oil and gas extracting sector without permitting Russian corporations to count on controlling it. Referring to the insufficient throughput capacity of Russian pipelines, the Kazakhstani side worked on opening up additional oil exporting routes bypassing the Russian territory.

Without prejudicing its alliance with Moscow, Astana was successfully trying to obtain more advantageous conditions of cooperation with Russia. Kazakhstan insisted on revising the terms and conditions of cooperation in space exploration with the resulting establishment of the Baiterek Space Rocket Complex owned by the parties in equal shares.

As it has already been pointed out, *Kyrgyzstan* has retained its predominant orientation towards Russia even after the 2005 events. To Bishkek, cooperation with Moscow is an important instrument of ensuring national security. At the same time, it is a means of expanding room for its political maneuvering in relations with its larger and stronger neighbors – China, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan.

In Kyrgyzstan, there is a Russian military base in Manas, and the American Air Force base is its direct neighbor. Major Russian corporations RAO UES and Gazprom have implemented some investment projects and continue to do so. Russia is Kyrgyzstan's major trade partner.

Neutral feelings have been typical of the Kyrgyz intelligentsia from the very start, and they have periodically made themselves felt in the area of the country's official foreign pol-

icy. In 1997 (prior to the nuclear tests in India and Pakistan), Bishkek came out with the initiative of establishing a nuclear-free area in Central Asia. The idea was discussed for some time, but was never implemented largely because it aroused a cautious attitude in Moscow and Beijing.

In the first half of the 2000s, a peculiarity of Kyrgyzstan's international contacts was its noticeable rapprochement with the PRC. Beijing appreciated Bishkek's readiness to make territorial concessions to China. The Chinese leadership was ready to treat Kyrgyzstan as its privileged regional partner in the security area. The availability of a common border could be a serious prerequisite in that regard. As it has been pointed out before, the PRC and Kyrgyzstan, independently from other countries, began to conduct joint maneuvers, which looked like a symbol of proximity of their military and political priorities.

The mass media kept discussing the PRC's desire to acquire a military base in the Kyrgyz territory. From China's point of view, its establishment could strengthen the positions of the Kyrgyz Government with regard to its domestic opposition. Moreover, it could serve as a counterpoise to the project of establishing an Indian military base in Tajikistan (see below).

During the 2005 events in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, Beijing, at the level of the mass media and experts, discussed a possibility of assisting the Kyrgyz Government, for example, by sending a Chinese military contingent or a limited force grouping of several SCO member-countries there. It possibly induced the country's new leadership to be cautious about its further rapprochement beyond the framework of multilateral cooperation with Russia's participation.

Along with the diplomatic efforts of many countries, Russia's and Uzbekistan's military assistance rendered to the Tajik Government contributed to ending the civil war in *Tajikistan*. It determined Dushanbe's interest in maintaining friendly relations with Moscow and Tashkent. However, relations with Uzbekistan were developing in a complicated manner because the Tajik Coalition Government lacked a possibility and the will to liquidate Uzbek combatants in the Tajik territory. The Government of Tajikistan had to maneuver to keep its relations with Tashkent in a constructive channel.

The relationship between Dushanbe and Afghanistan was being formed in no less complicated manner. The Tajik Government could not ignore the events in the neighboring country, a considerable part of whose population constituted ethnic Tajiks. Tajikistan did not want to interfere in the Afghan strife but had to support Afghan Tajiks from time to time. President E. Rakhmonov feared his own Tajik opposition and did not want it to grow stronger by its unification with radicals from among Afghan Tajiks. The President needed no interference in the internal affairs of Tajikistan by Afghan Tajiks. For that reason, he was ready to assist them aware that in case of their military defeat by the Taliban, refugees from Afghanistan (as it used to be) will flood Tajikistan and undermine the precarious stability in the country.

However, since the post-2001 situation in Afghanistan depended on mutual understanding between the US occupation troops in that country, the Government of H. Karzai and the leaders of the Tajik-Uzbek Northern Alliance, President E. Rakhmonov had to maneuver among them. Relations with the USA were of great military and political significance to Tajikistan to the extent not equal but comparable with the importance of its cooperation with Russia and Uzbekistan.

Since the start of the 2000s, Dushanbe's policy had experienced some influence from India, and there were certain reasons for it. Relation between India and the United States became closer, and Indian diplomacy could, to a certain extent, act in the regional policy as a natural factor limiting the influence of Pakistan who was believed to be a source of support to the Afghan Taliban. Partnership with Delhi could be one of auxiliary instruments for restraining the Taliban whom India was inclined to regard as Pakistan's prot?g?s. The project of establishing an Indian base in Tajikistan's territory was a manifestation of such feelings.

And finally, Dushanbe could not afford any tension in its relations with Iran who enjoyed some influence in the Western areas of Afghanistan and had a certain impact on the situation in North Afghanistan bordering on Tajikistan. The Tajik leadership avoided denouncing Iran's policy and refused to meet the USA's wishes in that respect.

For about five years, Russia and Tajikistan discussed the issue of reorganizing the 201st Russian motorized infantry division stationed in the Tajik territory (whose units assisted E. Rakhmonov during the civil war) into a military base. Simultaneously, Russian border troops were withdrawn from Tajikistan, and Tajik servicemen assumed control over the Tajik-Afghan border. As a result of these changes, the situation became less transparent in respect of permeability of that border to the movement of individuals or groups including armed groups and international drug-trafficking.

Russian companies were trying to expand their economic presence in the country. Russia remained Tajikistan's major trade partner. Russian companies began to implement investment projects connected with the construction of power generation and aluminum production facilities.

Labor migration issues began to play an important part in Russian-Tajik relations. Fleeing from unemployment, a great number of Tajiks, mostly unskilled, headed for large Russian cities where they formed the backbone of the construction and the municipal services sectors. The outflow of unemployed population helped stabilize the situation in Tajikistan. Remittances sent by Tajiks employed in Russia to Tajikistan began to play an important role in getting life in the country back on the rail. The issues of socioeconomic and humanitarian rights of Tajik citizens living in Russia occupied an important place in bilateral relations.

In the 2000s, the most complicated aspect of Moscow's interaction with the Central Asian countries were its relations with *Uzbekistan*. The country's important strategic position and its geopolitical and geo-economics potential gave grounds to regard Uzbekistan as one of the region's leaders. Russia could build allied relations with it. However, it was also possible to develop cooperation with Uzbekistan based on the principles of good-neighborliness, peaceful coexistence and selective cooperation. Russian diplomacy was ready to discuss both alternatives.

However, Uzbekistan's unstable political orientation and its hesitation between its demonstrative desire to become the USA's main partner in the region and its intentional turn-arounds to admitting the importance of its alliance with Russia posed a problem. As a result, both Moscow and Washington

treated their prospects of relations with Tashkent very cautiously. Possibly, that was the aim of the Uzbek diplomacy whose top officials just wanted the leaders of all countries of the world to get accustomed to the idea that *Uzbekistan’s main and universal priority in world affairs was to retain freedom of action but not to establish partnership or achieve integration with a country or a group of countries.*

Uzbekistan has never declared its striving for neutrality or non-alignment. From the moment it gained independence, its policy could best be described as “unstable alignment”. Non-alignment leaders rejected *the idea of military alliances with great powers in principle.* In contrast to them, Uzbekistan’s leaders did not reject this idea. The essence of their policy consisted in asserting the right to *enter into alliances frequently and freely, and change its allies as regularly avoiding any stable bonds with any of them.*

After the cooling of its relations with Washington in 2005, Uzbekistan became more tolerant of integration projects with Russia’s involvement. In 2006, it joined the Eurasian Economic Community, while Gazprom and Lukoil signed large contracts on the development of gas deposits with Uzbek partners.

In June 2004, Uzbekistan signed the Strategic Partnership Treaty, and in November 2005 – the Allied Relations Treaty with Russia. The former stipulated for holding consultations, “upon mutual consent”, in case of a situation “capable of producing a negative impact on the mutual interests of security or the interests of security of one of the Parties”. It was agreed not to allow any third party to use the territories of any of the two countries to the detriment of its partner’s sovereignty, security and territorial integrity. The treaty also stipulated for a possibility of granting each other the right of use of military facilities in their respective territories when necessary on the basis of separate agreements.

The Allied Relations Treaty contained much stronger wording. It reiterated the NATO formula stating that the countries undertook to regard an act of aggression against one of the parties as an aggression against both of them. The Treaty reaffirmed their commitment concerning a possibility of mutual use of each other’s military infrastructure.

Generally, it is hard to say definitely how stable Uzbekistan's line towards cooperation with Moscow could be. It is no easier to assess Uzbekistan's possible capacity for its policy of maneuvering between Russia, the West and China either.

Turkmenistan's foreign policy, despite its singularity against the background of orientations of the other CA countries, has been sufficiently consistent. Since the early 1990s, the country had pursued a policy of neutrality and ignored the regional integration processes. Ashgabat has maintained equitable relations with all of the neighboring countries without pretending to be a supporter of any of them. President S. Niyazov concentrated on the domestic policy, which included glorification of the Turkmen national spirit and completion of the sophisticated process of formation of the Turkmen nation based on the merger of a well-preserved identity of Turkmen tribes and their regional alliances.

Without claiming to be a democrat, S. Niyazov invested substantial, by Turkmen standards, funds and effort in creating symbols of the national unity of Turkmens and consolidation of their ethnic originality. That set of tasks was more important for the Turkmenbashi than for any other country in the region since historically it was the land of Turkmen nomads that was the most backward part in Central Asia. The process of ethno-national structuring of the population in the Turkmen oases lagged behind the processes, which (partially under the influence of Russia, China, India and Western countries) were progressing better in the other parts of the region for various reasons.

S. Niyazov's regime was one of the most authoritarian regimes in Central Asia. It gave birth to the personality cult of the Turkmenbashi noted for its distinctive Oriental features. Its establishment was accompanied by repressions against the President's political opponents and dissidence in general. Under such circumstances, Russian citizens of Turkmenistan "prejudiced" the President's authority since they were bearers of a more pluralistic and liberal culture than the indigenous ethnic groups. Avoiding direct repression against Russians during S. Niyazov's rule, the Turkmen Government was practically taking measures to drive them out of the country and turn Turkmenistan into a mono-ethnic state.

President S. Niyazov died in December 2006. The new leadership began to depart cautiously from the most odious postulates of the former Government and dismantled the Turkmenbashi’s personality cult in the first place. Its foreign policy did not undergo any radical changes, and its adherence to neutrality remained. Having formally participated in the CIS for many years, Turkmenistan has never assumed any commitments of cooperation within its framework. Having made sure back in the 1990s that Russia had no intention of “reintegrating” the CIS countries by force, Turkmenistan got accustomed to treating the Community exclusively as a platform for information exchange and dialogue. To legalize this practice, in August 2005 Turkmenistan made an official request of reducing its status to that of an associated member. Ashgabat did not renounce participation in the Community altogether.

Turkmenistan depends on Russian pipelines, through which it pipes its natural gas not only to Russian consumers but also to the countries West off Russia, Ukraine in particular. Russian companies find it profitable to buy Turkmenistan’s gas not only for domestic use but also for its re-export to third countries. Since the production cost of Turkmen gas is lower than prices on this fuel in West European markets, Russian corporations obtain high profits from its re-export.

Turkmenistan’s attempts to find some routes for exporting gas in the Southern direction, towards the Indian Ocean via Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan, produced limited results in the 2000s. The project of construction of a pipeline from Turkmenistan to China was more successful.

Its completion in December 2009 became a notable victory of the Turkmen “primary energy diplomacy”. From time to time, Ashgabat comes out in support of the EU plans to create a new corridor for gas delivery to Western consumers along the Nabucco pipeline, which is supposed to absorb gas flows from several countries¹⁰. However, Turkmenistan has assumed no specific commitments of exporting gas along this pipeline.

¹⁰ The Nabucco gas pipeline will stretch from Erzurum (Turkey) to Baumgarten via the territory of Bulgaria, Romania and Hungary. According to the intergovernmental agreement signed in July 2009, its construction is to be completed by 2014.

Approaches to the Assessment of Economic Development of the Newly Independent Central Asian States

Prior to the 2008-2009 crisis high rates of the GDP growth, moderate inflation and some poverty reduction were characteristic of the Central Asian countries. However, there were differences among the states in the quality of the economic growth, types of economic organization and structure of employment.

Market-oriented economic reforms carried out, to a varying extent, in conformity with recommendations of Western experts, produced contradictory results. Privatization justified itself in those sectors where development guaranteed high profits and fast payback to private investors. Such sectors were few; they included energy production and export, extraction of rare and precious metals, hydraulic energy generation and export, and aluminum smelting. But it was not in all countries that the profitable industries were sufficiently well-developed to ensure employment for the majority of the able-bodied population.

Under market-oriented conditions, privatization failed to ensure a normal process of agricultural production including the growing of cotton, rice, vegetables, fruit and melons. The fact that the population turned to cultivating illicit narcotic crops (opium poppy and cannabis) was a natural reaction in recognition of the fact that it was unprofitable to grow “legal” farm crops without state support. It was the denial of such support that gave impetus to narcoeconomy.

Privatization failed to maintain the manufacturing industries, primarily mechanical engineering, and make them competitive. Therefore, those regions in the Central Asian states that were situated in the “industrial belt” and were better developed found themselves in a deep economic depression after privatization. That led to forced migration abroad and to those few sectors that were capable of developing normally.

Privatization was a powerful means of redistribution of the national wealth among the various national elite groups. As in Russia, it was carried out in all of the Central Asian countries at

a stepped-up pace. Masterminds behind privatization feared that detailed elaboration of its consequences might result in the refusal of authorities to carry out market-oriented reforms.

In the 2000s, Kazakhstan turned into a “normal oil-producing country”, thanks to the establishment of an effective oil extraction sector with Western support. In the middle of the decade, its growth rate constituted 10%. The country occupied the leading position in the region in the GDP indicators and its per capita volume (\$8,200 per year). Oil-extracting enterprises remained in public ownership, but smaller enterprises were privatized. Private property on land including farmland was introduced in 2003.

A national fund was set up to accumulate taxes from the energy export taking into account a possible reduction in oil earnings. Kazakhstan encouraged the activity of foreign investors in the oil- and gas-extracting sector but it watched them closely to protect the interests of national companies. Although the poverty problem was less dramatic in Kazakhstan than elsewhere in Central Asia, in the second half of the 2000s 19% of the population lived below the poverty line.

In carrying out reforms, Kyrgyzstan followed the recommendations of international financial institutions most closely. The scale of privatization in the country was the largest in all Central Asia, and the agricultural reform was a radical one. The private sector absorbed 60% of the working population and produced 85% of the country’s GDP. The most successful privatization project in industry was a joint Kyrgyz-Canadian enterprise, which developed the Kumtor gold-bearing deposit. However, the attempt to set into operation industrial enterprises built in Soviet time failed. The manufacturing sector ceased to exist. Coupled with the absence of a competitive agricultural production sector, this caused a grave economic situation in the country. According even to the official data, at the end of the 2000s 40% of the population of Kyrgyzstan lived below the poverty line. The poor population is mostly concentrated in the Kyrgyz part of the Fergana Valley. The structure of the Kyrgyz export is dominated by gold (40%), mercury, uranium, light industry products, cotton and tobacco. The country imports oil, gas, machinery and equipment, and even foodstuffs.

Tajikistan remains the poorest country in the region. The per capita GDP share is approximately \$1,200 per year. Prior to the crisis, the average annual economic growth rate was 9.4%. Agriculture producing barely enough to feed those who work in it employs 67.2% of the population. Sixty four percent of the country's citizens live below the poverty line.

Almost half of the country's export revenue comes from the only large industrial enterprise, the Tajik Aluminum Production Plant (TajAZ). *Tajikistan*'s economy is supported by remittances from labor migrants, predominantly from Russia. Under such circumstances, it is hardly surprising that a large part of the population lives on incomes from drug trafficking. The Government is trying to attract foreign investment in the development of power engineering, aluminum production and transportation infrastructure.

Besides aluminum, *Tajikistan* exports electricity, cotton and fruit. The import structure is dominated by electricity, oil, gas, bauxite and alumina – the feedstock for the aluminum production.

According to the official statistics, in the 2000s (prior to the crisis) *Turkmenistan* was developing at a rate of over 20% per annum. However, according to the estimates of international exports, the actual economic growth did not exceed 4%. The annual per capita GDP share was \$8,000 due to a high level of public spending on state-sponsored programs in the area of culture and health care. The population receives gas, electricity, water and salt free of charge and spends little on utilities. Agriculture employs 48.2% of the population, and 13.8% work in industry. According to the official data, only 1% of the population lives below the poverty line, while according to the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development the indicator is equal to 58%.

The economy is under state control. Legislation does not provide for privatization of oil and gas deposits. Trade in cotton is also controlled by the state. There are stiff currency and export restrictions. *Turkmenistan* exports natural gas, oil, oil products and cotton.

State regulation also prevails in *Uzbekistan*'s economy. The state has retained its control over foreign economic activity and currency operations, and the state procurement system still

applies to cotton and grain. The annual per capita GDP constitutes \$1,800. Prior to the crisis, the economic growth rate varied between 4% and 7%. Agriculture employs 44% of the population, and 20% work in industry.

Uzbekistan has not carried out any radical market-oriented reforms and has retained a diversified network of social protection of the population. This has saved the country from the poverty scale typical of Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. Only 27.5% of the population lives below the poverty line. The country exports cotton (the world's second largest exporter), gold, gas and mineral fertilizers.

Gaps in the levels of development account for lack of interest of the CA countries in trading with each other. Not a single Central Asian country, for example, is included into the group of Kazakhstan's priority partners. Kazakhstan's share in the foreign trade turnover of Uzbekistan constitutes as little as 3%. Tajikistan is the only exception. Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan account for 21% and 7% in its foreign trade turnover respectively.

“Hydropolitical Weapon” in Relations between Central Asian Countries

The most important problem of relations in Central Asia is reconciliation of water use conditions, primarily distribution of the runoff of transboundary rivers. More than half of the territory of the CA countries is covered by deserts, semi-deserts and arid steppes. Water is the main production factor in agriculture where the majority of the population of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan is employed.

Rivers are the main source of water. Groundwater resources are limited and underdeveloped. River water resources are distributed unevenly. In Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, the share of the river runoff formed in their own territories constitutes 99% and 60% respectively, while in Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan its share is equal to 47%, 12% and 0.7%. Eighty percent of the region's water resources are formed in the mountainous areas of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

Pressure on the Central Asian water system is increasing as the area of irrigated land grows. In 1995-2000, this indicator went up by 7%. The governments plan a further increase in the production of cotton, which is one of the main sources of export revenues. The efficiency of water resources use remains low: up to half of water intended for irrigation is lost due to evaporation and filtration.

The Syr-Darya River with the annual runoff of about 37 km³ is formed in the North of Kyrgyzstan, then flows through Uzbekistan and South Kazakhstan (crossing the Northern part of Tajikistan on its way) and falls into the Northern part of the Aral Sea. In 1998, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan signed an agreement according to which Uzbekistan undertook to provide Kyrgyzstan with natural gas and Kazakhstan with coal and black oil in exchange for water.

The agreement however is often broken by all of the Parties. Time and again, problems arise with the supply of energy to Kyrgyzstan. But the Kyrgyz Government, having no guarantees of energy delivery, periodically uses the Toktogul water-storage reservoir on the Naryn River, Syr-Darya's tributary, in the power-generation instead of the irrigation regime. This means that water discharge from the storage reservoir takes place in winter causing the destruction of dams and the flooding of farmlands in Uzbekistan as well as a shortage of water required for irrigation in summer.

In June 2001, the Kyrgyz Parliament passed a law stipulating for the collection of payments from the countries using Kyrgyz water resources. According to that document, the Government of Kyrgyzstan was supposed to demand participation of the water-consuming countries in funding the Kyrgyz waterworks. The law was received with irritation in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. Later Bishkek mitigated its initial stand and limited itself to demanding payment from the countries situated in the lower reaches of the rivers crossing the Kyrgyz territory only for the water passing through Kyrgyz water-storage reservoirs and canals. In March 2002, Uzbekistan under its agreement with Kyrgyzstan committed itself to covering part of the operation costs of the Toktogul water-storage reservoir in exchange for the guaranteed water supply during the irrigation period.

The Amu-Darya River with the annual runoff of about 75 km³ flows along the Tajik-Afghan and the Uzbek-Afghan borders, passes through the territory of Turkmenistan, flows along the Turkmen-Uzbek border, crosses the North-Western Uzbekistan and falls into the Aral Sea. The Amu-Darya runoff is formed in Tajikistan (80%) and North Afghanistan (20%).

Tajikistan's quota for the Amu-Darya runoff withdrawal constitutes 12%. Intending to raise its agricultural output, Dushanbe insists on increasing the water withdrawal limit, which it exceeds anyway, according to Uzbekistan. Dushanbe plans to complete the construction of the Rogun hydropower plant, which will permit Tajikistan to regulate the Amu-Darya almost entirely. Tashkent is opposing this project. Divergence of interests in the water use area is one of the factors causing tension in the Tajik-Uzbek relations.

According to the 1946 Soviet-Afghan Agreement, Afghanistan is entitled to the annual withdrawal of 9 km³ of water (50% of the runoff) from the Pyange River, the Amu-Darya's main tributary. Afghanistan is currently using about 2 km³ of the Pyange runoff but if peace is restored in the country, water withdrawal may increase. This will aggravate the water use situation in Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan.

The water problem has been chronically aggravating the Uzbek-Turkmen relations. According to the 1996 agreement, the countries have equal water withdrawal limits – 22 km³ annually each. However, Uzbek officials often accuse Turkmenistan of exceeding its limits. In October 2000, Turkmenistan started building an artificial lake in the Karakum desert. Ashgabat maintains that the Golden Age Lake will be filled with drain water and will not require any additional water withdrawal from the Amu-Darya. Uzbek experts however believe that the lake will not be able to exist without the Amu-Darya water. Ashgabat's plans of increasing the area under irrigated crops can also have an adverse effect on Uzbekistan's water supply.

Water distribution problems aggravate the internal political situation in the Central Asian countries sharpening contradictions between provinces and districts and provoking conflicts between residents of neighboring populated areas.

According to estimates, two thirds of provinces in the Central Asian countries receive at least half of their water from without. In Uzbekistan, the regions situated in the upper reaches of the Amu-Darya River, namely, Surkhandarya, Navoiy and Bukhara provinces, consume 50-60% of the water withdrawal limit while the downstream provinces – Khorezm and Karakalpakstan – use only 7-8%.

In the water use area, the Central Asian countries failed to reach a coordinated approach to managing the regional water resources as a single system. In February 1992, a five-sided agreement was signed in Almaty concerning cooperation in water resources use and protection, according to which the water withdrawal limits that had existed in Soviet time held true. The Interstate Commission for Water Coordination (ICWC) established there was vested with the power to pass decisions on the basis of a consensus. Its executive bodies – the Amu-Darya and the Syr-Darya Basin Water Management Organizations (BWOs) – were also formed. In 1993, the CA countries established the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea (IFAS) that was supposed to be formed from the admission fees and annual assignments from the state budgets of the member-states in the amount of 0.3% of the GNP.

The ICWC activity focused on quota allocation without considering any other circumstances failed to prevent conflicts around the water management issue. Prevalence of Uzbek citizens in the BWOs and the location of the ICWC and both BWOs in Uzbekistan gave grounds to the other countries to suspect those agencies of bias. Only Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan contributed their full fees into the ICWC budget. The IFAS stopped functioning because of a chronic underfunding. In 1997, Kazakhstan completed the construction of a dam dividing the Aral Sea into two water bodies. The Western, Uzbek part of the sea was cut off from the Syr-Darya runoff and continued to shrink, while the water level in the Eastern, Kazakhstani part started rising.

As it has already been pointed out, the CA countries are trying to address a number of water use problems based on bilateral and trilateral agreements. In 2000, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan signed an agreement on the use of water of the

Chu and Talas rivers, according to which Kazakhstan undertook to compensate a part of expenses on the maintenance of the interstate water management infrastructure to Kyrgyzstan. To address the issues associated with unsatisfactory implementation of the 1998 Kazakhstani-Kyrgyz-Uzbek agreement, Kazakhstan came out with the initiative of setting up a Syr-Darya Water and Energy Consortium. In December 2001, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan signed a preliminary agreement on the consortium establishment but Uzbekistan refused to join it.

After the merger of the Central Asian Economic Community with the EurAsEC, the latter started to review the project of establishment of a regional water and energy consortium within its framework. The Central Asian water and energy industry requires large-scale investment, and only Russian companies have so far demonstrated readiness to invest.

On September 2006, Astana hosted an informal meeting of the Presidents of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. They discussed the use of water and energy resources. The meeting showed that serious differences on this issue remain between the countries. The only decision they managed to arrive at was the one on reactivating the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea.

The problem of joint use of transboundary rivers is confronting the Kazakhstani-Chinese relations as well. The Irtysh and Ili rivers formed in the Chinese territory are extremely important for Kazakhstan. The Irtysh River takes its source as the “Black Irtysh” in the Mongolian Altai Mountains and falls into Lake Zaisan. Then it crosses the North-Eastern Kazakhstan, enters the West Siberian Lowland, flows through Omsk and Tyumen provinces in Russia and falls into the Ob River.

The Ili River falls into Lake Balkhash. The Irtysh provides water for the cities of Ust-Kamenogorsk, Semipalatinsk and Pavlodar as well as Karaganda and Astana via the Irtysh-Karaganda canal. China is increasing water withdrawal from the Irtysh and Ili rivers for the needs of the XUAR industrial development. Construction of a 300-km long canal started in the PRC, which will stretch from the Black Irtysh to the town of Karamai, the center of the XUAR’s oil industry. China plans

to withdraw 0.45 km³ of Irtysh water annually via the canal and up to 2 km³ in future, when the canal becomes fully operational (around 2020). As a result, the river will lose about a quarter of its runoff, which will have grave consequences for Kazakhstan's environment and economy and produce a negative impact on water consumption in Omsk and Tyumen provinces of Russia. A similar project intended to provide the Western part of the Tarim Depression with water from the Ili River has been developed in China. It will threaten Lake Balkhash with shoaling.

In 2001, China and Kazakhstan signed a framework agreement on the use of transboundary rivers. Regular bilateral negotiations on the Irtysh River problem have yielded no mutually acceptable solutions. Kazakhstan's proposal on signing a trilateral agreement (with Russia's participation) on a joint use of transboundary rivers was never implemented. China objects to reviewing this issue within a trilateral framework and prefers bilateral talks with Kazakhstan and Russia.

“Geopolitics of Transportation” in Central Asia

Historically, railroads and highways began to be built in Central Asia for connecting it with Russia's European regions. In Soviet time, the Central Asian transportation network was linked to the All-Union communication system stretching from its Western border to the Pacific coast. “Turksib” (the Turkestan-Siberia Railroad) linked the Central Asian railways with Trans-Siberian main. At the moment of breakup of the USSR, all main railroads and highways in the newly-independent Central Asian states served for communication with Russia, i.e. headed northwards.

Adapting the transportation system to the needs of their independent development was one of the major political and economic objectives. Its achievement was required for developing Central Asia's trade with China, Turkey, Iran, India and Pakistan.

In 1990, a number of bilateral and multilateral instruments on the development of transportation contacts were signed

between the CA countries and the neighboring states.¹¹ In the early 1900s, railroad and automobile communication was arranged between the newly-independent states and China. In September 1990, the Chinese and the former Soviet railroad sections were joined permitting communication between China and Kazakhstan via the Alashankou (Friendship) check point. That signaled the completion of construction of another transcontinental Eurasian main connecting China’s Pacific coast (the port of Lianyungang) with the West European Atlantic coast (Rotterdam, the Netherlands) via Kazakhstan, Russia, and East and Central European countries. China modernized the existing roads, which increased their traffic capacity.

Besides that, the PRC modernized its section of the Almaty-Khorgos-Urumqi highway serving for passenger and goods transportation between Kazakhstan and China, and started to build the Lianyungang-Khorgos highway, which would connect its Western border with the Pacific coast.

In the early 1990s, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, China and Pakistan began to discuss the project of construction of a highway to link all these countries. In March 1995, the four countries signed an agreement on transit traffic. The highway starting in Almaty was connected with the Karakorum highway linking China and Pakistan. That route became the shortest way from China to the Indian Ocean. Motor freight communication along the Karakorum route (Islamabad – Kashgar – Bishkek – Almaty) was opened in October 2006. A road connecting the Karakorum highway with Tajikistan (Murgab – Kulma Pass – Karakorum highway) was built in 2004.

In 1996, China, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan signed an agreement on the construction of the highway Andizhan – Osh – Irkeshtam – Kashgar. Uzbekistan reconstructed the highway

¹¹ The most important of them were the Chinese-Kazakhstani agreement on rail transportation (February 1992), the protocol on cooperation in the area or rail, road and sea transport between China and Uzbekistan (March 1992), the protocol on shipping between Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Russia and Turkmenistan (April 1992), the agreement on coordination of rail transport operation and cooperation in the area of transit traffic between Azerbaijan, Georgia, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan (May 1996). Besides that, an agreement on establishing a North-South transport corridor (2000) was signed between Russia, India and Iran, with Kazakhstan joining it later.

Tashkent – Andizhan – Osh, which connected the country's capital with the Uzbek territories in the Fergana Valley. Formerly, an automobile communication route crossed the Tajik territory.

Works on the section Osh – Irkeshtam – Kashgar started in 2000. In 2002, a check point was established in Irkeshtam on the Kyrgyz-Chinese border. At their meeting in August 2006, trade ministers of the SCO member-countries passed a resolution on accelerating the construction of the highway, which was the first transportation project implemented within the framework of that organization.

By 2010, a railroad connecting Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan with China (Andizhan – Osh – Kashgar) is supposed to be completed. On its part, China has completed the construction of the Urumqi-Kashgar branch line. However, the issue of the project's funding has not been settled yet.

Turkmenistan's priority is the development of communication with Iran. In May 1996, the Turkmen-Iranian railroad Tejen – Serakhs – Mashhad was put into operation. Although the capacity of the railroad is not high, its opening gave the Central Asian countries direct access to the Persian Gulf (the port of Bender-Abbas). Construction of a railroad between the Iranian city of Tejen and Babadaikhan in Turkmenistan started in 2000. The network of highways connecting Turkmenistan with Iran has been considerably expanded.

Among the international transportation projects being discussed in the region is the construction of a railroad along the Eastern coast of the Caspian Sea (Eraliev – Bekdash – Turkmenbashi – Iran), a railroad and a highway Turkmenistan – Afghanistan – Pakistan, and highways Uzbekistan – Afghanistan – Pakistan (Tashkent – Kabul – Karachi) and Tajikistan – Afghanistan – Pakistan. The construction of several bridges across the Pyanje River separating Tajikistan and Afghanistan began in 2005 on American funds.

Efforts to develop transport communication between Central Asia, Transcaucasia and the Black Sea Region were made with the support of the European Union. In 1993, the EU, Central Asian and Transcaucasian countries developed the concept of a large-scale program of establishing the Transport Corridor Europe – Caucasus – Asia (TRACECA). It

implied the development of an infrastructure for a shortcut from Central Asia to the Black Sea ports, the expansion of access of the Central Asian and Transcaucasian countries to European markets, the deepening of regional cooperation and the attraction of funds of international financial institutions and private investment.

In 1995, the first list of TRACECA projects was compiled, and their implementation began in 1996. Within the framework of the program, preference was given to the Transcaucasian states; however, a number of technical cooperation projects and several investment projects were implemented in the Central Asian countries as well. In 1998, twelve Central Asian, Transcaucasian, and Central and East-European countries signed an agreement on the development of the Europe-Caucasus-Asia corridor in Baku. The document was signed by all of the Central Asian states except Turkmenistan¹². The Near-Caspian countries, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan began to develop the maritime industry. They started building sea craft including tankers. Kazakhstan undertook a reconstruction of the port of Aktau and opened ferry communication with Baku. Modernization of the port of Turkmenbashi (formerly Krasnovodsk) was carried out within the framework of the TRACECA program, which increased its capacity substantially. Regular freight and passenger transportation started between the port of Turkmenbashi, the Iranian ports on the Caspian Sea, and Astrakhan. Iran modernized the Caspian ports of Bander Enzeli, Neka and Noushehr.

International air traffic began to develop. In the early 1990s, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan opened regular air communication with Turkey, Iran, Pakistan, India, China, the USA, and a number of West European, Middle Eastern and South-East Asian countries. They modernized their airports and renewed and increased their aircraft fleet. By the end of the 1990s, new air routes linked Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan with China, Turkey and Iran. In 2004, air communication was resumed between Dushanbe and Kabul.

¹² Ashgabat did not sign the agreement due to differences with Azerbaijan on the issue of ownership of several Caspian oil shelves.

Another line in reforming transportation mains in the region was the development of communications linking interior areas in some countries. Interstate communications were often better developed in Central Asia than internal ones, and traveling from one part of a country to another sometimes required crossing a neighboring state's territory.

A number of highways including the highways Almaty – Karaganda – Astana, Atyrau – Uralsk and Uralsk – Aktyubinsk were reconstructed in Kazakhstan. Construction of the highway Kyzylasker – Kirovsky was completed thus permitting to link the South-Kazakhstan Province with the rest of the country by-passing Uzbekistan.

Construction of a railroad from Druzhba station on the Chinese border to the Caspian port of Aktau is planned. Credits extended by the Asian Bank for Reconstruction and Development permitted to reconstruct the Bishkek – Osh highway in Kyrgyzstan, and construction of the Jalal-Abad – Osh highway via the town of Uzgen is now in progress, which will permit to by-pass the territory of Uzbekistan.

Uzbekistan built the Uchkuduk – Karauzyak railroad, which linked Bukhara and Nukus by-passing the Turkmen territory. In 2006, Turkmenistan put into operation the Ashgabat – Dashohuz railroad crossing the Kara-Kum desert and connecting the country's Northern and Southern regions. Highways linking Ashgabat with Turkmenbashi, Dashohuz and Mary are undergoing reconstruction. Tajikistan is building new roads, mostly on the funds from external sources.

The reform of the transport communication network in the region has not been completed yet. The mains linking the Central Asian countries with China, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iran are not numerous. They require expansion and modernization.

Energy and Electricity Export Capacity of Smaller Countries

Oil and gas resources are unevenly distributed among the Central Asian countries. Kazakhstan has substantial amounts of oil and natural gas. Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan are

endowed with large gas reserves. Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan have no hydrocarbon fuel of their own. Oil and gas resources are concentrated on the Eastern shore of the Caspian Sea.

The data on oil and gas reserves in the CA countries vary substantially. According to Soviet end of the 1980s estimates, proved oil reserves in Kazakhstan constitute 1.5–2 billion tons. According to Kazakhstan (2006 data), these reserves amount to 5.5 billion tons, and those of natural gas – to 3trillion m³.

In 2006, 68 million tons of oil was extracted in Kazakhstan, and 57 million tons were exported. The country is a major oil exporter with a considerable potential for increasing oil extraction. In the mid-2000s, gas extraction in Kazakhstan reached 26.2 billion m³, and 7 billion m³ of that amount were exported. In 2008, 70.7 billion tons of oil was extracted in the country, and 62.4 billion tons were exported. In 2008, gas extraction in Kazakhstan reached 32.9 billion m³, and one third of it was exported.

In Turkmenistan, proved gas reserves constitute 2.6 trillion m³, although in April 2006 its authorities announced that the country’s gas reserves reached 22 trillion m³. Proved oil reserves in Turkmenistan constitute about 0.1 billion tons. In 2003–2007, 9.3 to 10.8 million tons of oil were extracted in the country. In 2007, natural gas extraction constituted 73.5 billion m³.

In Uzbekistan, expected gas reserves are estimated at 5.9 trillion m³, and the volume of proved oil reserves constitutes 0.1 billion tons. Uzbekistan extracts over 60 billion m³ of gas annually and exports about 10 billion m³. Oil extraction in the country is falling due to exhaustion of the main deposits. In 2005, 5.4 million tons of oil were extracted and consumed domestically.

In China’s Xinjiang, oil and gas reserves are estimated at 0.2 billion tons and 1 trillion m³ respectively. In 2008, 27.2 million tons of oil and 24 billion m³ of gas were extracted in the XUAR.

The Central Asian countries are rich in coal. Coal reserves in Kazakhstan are estimated at 75 billion tons (4% of the total world reserve). Uzbekistan has 5.9 billion tons of coal. Coal reserves in Kyrgyzstan constitute 1 billion tons. About 80,000 tons of coal is mined in Tajikistan annually.

Uranium reserves of Kazakhstan are estimated at 1.7 million tons, which constitutes 19% of the world resources (second place in the world). Uranium production is carried out by the “Kazatomprom” State Company, which became its largest producer in the world in 2009 (its volume of output is 13,500 tons). Joint ventures with Russia, China, Japan, Canada and France engaged in uranium mining operate in Kazakhstan. Kazakhstan exports uranium protoxide-oxide to China, Japan, South Korea and the USA.

In October 2006, a Russian-Kazakhstani agreement was signed on the establishment of a joint venture on uranium dressing within the framework of the International Uranium-Dressing Center to be opened in Angarsk. In 2007, Kazakhstan started delivering its uranium to Russia.

Explored uranium reserves in Uzbekistan constitute from 55,000 to 80,000 tons while expected reserves are estimated at 230,000 tons. The country rates seventh in the world in the amount of uranium reserves and it rates fifth in the volume of its output. Uranium is mined by the Navoiy State Mining and Smelting Mills (NMSM). In 2007, it produced 2,270 tons of uranium, and it plans to increase the output half as much by 2012.

Since 1992, the American company NUKEM had been the sole importer of Uzbek uranium. In 2006, it lost its monopolistic position. The NMSM signed an agreement with Japan on exporting 300 tons of uranium protoxide-oxide in 2007. The contract was signed for a period of five years, and the annual volume of delivery and prices will be reviewed on an annual basis. Besides that, an agreement was signed on the annual export of 300 tons of uranium to South Korea in 2010–2014. The plans of establishing a joint venture for uranium prospecting and mining with Russia were never implemented.

Since independence, energy exchange between the Central Asian countries has decreased. Kazakhstan supplies coal and gas to Kyrgyzstan. Uzbekistan has replaced Turkmenistan as the main supplier of gas to the CA countries. Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan rely on the supply of Uzbek gas. The consumer countries accuse Uzbekistan periodically of using gas export for exerting political and economic pressure on them.

In the Fergana Valley, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan practice mutual electricity flip-over. Kazakhstan (being a net electricity exporter since 2002) imports electricity from Russia, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan and simultaneously exports it to Russia and the borderline areas of Uzbekistan

The Central Asian countries are increasing electricity export to their Southern neighbors. Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan supply electricity to Afghanistan, and Turkmenistan supplies it to Turkey and Iran. In 2003, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan began to export electricity to Russia.

“Pipeline Diplomacy” in Regional Relations

In the 1990s, Kazakhstan exported most of its oil along the Atyrau-Samara pipeline whose throughput capacity after the reconstruction reached 15 million tons annually. The Tenghiz-Novorossiysk pipeline was commissioned in 2001. It was built by the Caspian Pipeline Consortium (CPC) whose shareholders were the Governments of Russia, Kazakhstan and Oman as well as a number of transnational oil companies¹³. New branch lines – Karachaganak – Atyrau and Kemkiyak – Atyrau – were connected to that pipeline.

It was planned to increase the throughput capacity of the Tenghiz-Novorossiysk oil pipeline from 32 to 67 million tons annually. But in 1999, Turkey, referring to environmental safety considerations, introduced restrictions on the passage of tankers through the Black Sea straights. Its decision made the project of increasing oil piping via the Russian part of the Black Sea coast partially pointless.

¹³ The structure of the CPC shareholders changed over time. Currently, 31% of shares of the Caspian Pipeline Consortium belongs to the Russian Federation (administered by Transneft Company); 20.75% belongs to Kazakhstan (19% belongs to KazMunaiGaz National Company and 1.75% to Kazakhstan Pipeline Ventures owned by KazMunaiGaz); 15% and 17.5% belong to the American companies Chevron and Mobil respectively; 12.5% to LukArco Corporation (owned by the Russian Lukoil); 7.5 % belongs to Rosneft-Shell Company (Russia – the Netherlands); 2% to Eni (Italy); 2% to British Gas (Great Britain); and 1.75% belongs to Oryx Company (the USA). In 2008, the Government of Oman sold its share to Russia, and in 2009 BP Amoco Company left the Consortium.

It is assumed that this obstacle will be overcome thanks to the construction, with Russia's participation, of a new pipeline, Burgas – Alexandroupolis, from Bulgaria to Greece. Kazakhstan is supposed to continue supplying its oil to Novorossiysk, which will then be transported directly to the port of Burgas by-passing the straights. Up to 17 million tons of oil annually can be supplied to the European market by that route.

The US Administration has exerted much effort to get Kazakhstan connected to the Baku-Jeikhan oil pipeline leading from Azerbaijan to Turkey via the Georgian territory. It was built in 2005 without Russia's participation and was intended to liquidate its monopoly on the westward transportation of Caspian oil. Russian companies tried to impede the implementation of the project resorting to Government support in a number of cases. Kazakhstan's leadership gave its political support to the project and agreed to use that route by supplying oil in tankers across the Caspian Sea as far as Baku.

However, Astana was cautious about its participation in the construction of a technically sophisticated and expensive Transcaspian branch Aktau – Baku from Kazakhstan to Azerbaijan via the Caspian Sea bottom. Washington nonetheless continued lobbying the project. Kazakhstan's leadership has not rejected the idea in principle because in case of a substantial increase in oil output the pipeline to Novorossiysk will be insufficient for piping additional amounts of fuel.

Starting with the second half of the 1990s, China became interested in the Central Asian energy resources, primarily Kazakh oil. More than half of China's import comes from the Middle East, and Beijing is trying to expand the range of supply sources. The PRC invests in oil and gas extraction in many countries of the world. From the viewpoint of reliability, Beijing considers Kazakhstani oil attractive because it can be delivered to the PRC by land. This may prove more costly but will reduce China's dependence on shipping.

In 1997, the China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) acquired the Kazakhstani companies "Aktobemunaigaz" and "Uzenmunaigaz", and in 2003 it purchased its "Northern Buzachi" deposit. In 2005, China assumed control over "PetroKazakhstan" Company owning the Kumkol deposit.

Shortly after, in 2006, the Chinese State Investment Corporation “CITIC Group” acquired the Karazhanbas deposit in the West of Kazakhstan.

In April 2009, the CNPC purchased 50% of shares of the Kazakhstani Company “Manghistaumunaigaz” extracting approximately 5 million tons of oil annually from 15 deposits. Simultaneously, China granted an unprecedented credit in the amount of \$10 billion dollars to Kazakhstan. Five billion were intended for the national oil company “Kazmunaigaz”, and the other \$5 billion – for the Development Bank of Kazakhstan. The parties did not disclose the terms and conditions of the agreement¹⁴.

China’s 2003 attempt to acquire 16% of shares of the Kashagan Consortium developing the largest deposit on Kazakhstan’s Caspian shelf was frustrated by the American company Exxon Mobil, which managed to intercept the contract.

Construction of the Atasu – Alashankou oil pipeline with the capacity of 10 million tons stretching from Kazakhstan to the Chinese border was completed in 2005. In October 2009, the second section of the Kazakhstani-Chinese oil pipeline Kenkiyak – Kumkol was commissioned. It is planned to bring its throughput capacity up to 20 million tons. The pipeline however does not operate at full capacity. It was partially used for piping some limited volumes of Russian oil to China but in December 2009 the Chinese side rejected the proposal of the Russian company TNK-BP to go on with that practice. It is worthwhile noting that the pipeline does not cross the Russian territory and is *the first channel of oil export from Kazakhstan independent from Russia*.

In the early 2000s, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan started to export oil via Iran by the “substitution” method. Oil is delivered by tankers to the Iranian ports on the Caspian Sea and is used for domestic consumption in North Iran. In exchange, Iranian companies ship an equivalent amount of oil from their own deposits on the Persian Gulf coast to those consumers of Kazakh and Turkmen oil who have concluded relevant contracts with Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan.

¹⁴ According to press reports, a part of the credit was used by Kazakhstan to underpin the national currency exchange rate.

In 2003, Iran completed the construction of an oil pipeline from the port of Neka to Teheran, which opened an additional possibility for exporting Central Asian oil via Iran. However, projects of this type are referred to the category of “politically risky”. The United States is against Iran’s participation in any schemes of oil export from Central Asia.

It is prohibited to the American companies in Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan to cooperate with Iranian corporations.

Gas from Central Asia (Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan) is piped westwards along the old Soviet pipelines “Central Asia – Center” and “Bukhara – Urals”. Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan are transit countries for the Turkmen gas export (while Kazakhstan alone is a transit country when gas is piped through the Western branch of the “Central Asia – Center” pipeline). Although the pipeline’s throughput capacity has increased, Turkmenistan cannot realize its export potential in full measure. Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan are interested in exporting their own gas instead of piping that of Turkmenistan. To overcome these difficulties, in May 2007 the Presidents of Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Russia agreed on the construction of the Caspian gas pipeline with a throughput capacity of 30 billion m³ annually.

In 2008, Moscow and Ashgabat reached a preliminary agreement on the construction of the “East – West” pipeline by Gazprom in Turkmenistan, which will connect its largest Yolotan deposit with the future Near-Caspian gas main. Turkmenistan however demanded that the paragraph stipulating for its linkage with the Near-Caspian gas main be removed from the draft agreement. Besides that, Ashgabat insisted on the funding of construction solely by the Russian side. The parties failed to reach understanding on that issue, and construction of the Near-Caspian gas main did not begin as planned. Turkmenistan is trying to avoid any obligation to export the resources from the Yolotan deposit via the Near-Caspian main.

In 1997, a Korpedje – Kurt Kui pipeline linked Turkmenistan and Iran. Its throughput capacity is not high (14 billion m³ annually), and it does not solve the problem of diversifying the Turkmen gas export. A project of supplying Turkmen gas to Armenia via the Iranian territory is now being developed.

However, Iran is a gas exporter itself, and in this regard can compete with Turkmenistan for the markets of Caucasian states.

At the end of the 1990s, the US Administration supported the project of construction of a gas pipeline, through which Turkmen gas will be piped along the Caspian Sea bottom and reach Turkey via Azerbaijan and Georgia. In November 1999, the Heads of State concerned signed a declaration on the principles of the project implementation. However, some difficulties followed. Russian, Iranian and Azerbaijani companies were not interested in Turkmenistan entering the Turkish gas market. Baku and Ashgabat failed to agree on the issue of ownership of the Serdar (Kyapaz) gas deposit. No understanding was reached on the distribution of quotas on the export of gas through the future pipeline. Nonetheless, the project was not removed from discussion. The “gas wars” between Russia and Ukraine in 2006–2007 and 2008–2009 instigated the EU interest in lobbying the project.

The project of construction of a gas pipeline from Turkmenistan to Pakistan via Afghanistan (Dovletabad – Kandagar – Multan) had been discussed since the second half of the 1990s. The project enjoyed the support of the USA and Saudi Arabia. In 1997, a consortium was established for its construction, which was headed by the American company Unocal. Washington’s sanctions against the Taliban movement and difficulties with finding investors made Unocal give up the project.

After the Taliban had been stripped of power, the discussion of the project supported by the new Afghan Government, Pakistan, the USA and the Asian Development Bank was resumed. The pipeline was supposed to reach the Indian city of Fazilka, so India joined the project as well. But another aggravation of the situation in Afghanistan did not permit to implement the plan.

In April 2006, Turkmenistan signed an agreement with China on the export of natural gas in the amount of 30 billion m³ annually, starting with 2009. The agreement stipulated for the construction of a gas pipeline from Turkmenistan’s deposits on the Amu-Darya River to Shanghai, and China undertook to hold consultations with transit countries (Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan).

In 2006, China also signed an agreement on purchasing 30 billion m³ of gas from Kazakhstan annually. This prompted the idea of building a gas pipeline parallel to the Atasu – Alashankou line. In July 2007, the CNPC obtained a license on the development of the Samandele gas deposit on the right bank of the Amu-Darya River. In December 2009, the first section of the pipeline Turkmenistan – Uzbekistan – Kazakhstan – China with a throughput capacity of 13 billion m³ annually was put into operation. By 2012, its annual throughput capacity is planned to reach 40 billion m³. As gas extraction in Kazakhstan increases it will be exported to China along this pipeline.

Gazprom is working with the Central Asian exporters. The Company has started a reconstruction of the Central Asia – Center pipeline, which will permit to increase its throughput capacity from 45 to 90 billion m³ annually. In 2002, a Russian-Kazakhstani joint venture “KazRosGaz” was established to export Kazakhstani gas to Russia. After processing, gas will be partially returned to Kazakhstan and partially re-exported. In October 2006, Russia and Kazakhstan reached agreement on establishing a joint venture for processing Kazakhstan’s gas based on the Orenburg Gas Processing Plant. The entire amount of exported Kazakhstan’s gas is purchased by Russia.

In 2002, Gazprom and Uzbekneftegaz signed an agreement stipulating for the purchase of up to 10 billion m³ of Uzbek gas annually in 2003–2012. However the Russian side buys actually about 14 billion m³ of Uzbek gas.

In April 2003, Russia and Turkmenistan signed an inter-governmental framework agreement for a period of 25 years on cooperation in the gas sector stipulating for an increase in the volume of export of Turkmen gas to Russia from 5–6 billion m³ in 2004 to 60–70 billion m³ in 2007 and 70–80 billion m³ annually in 2009–2028. In 2006–2008, Gazprom purchased 41–42 billion m³ of gas annually. The average price grew from \$65 to \$140 per thousand m³. Gazprom re-exports gas purchased from Turkmenistan predominantly to Ukraine.

The contract for 2009 stipulated for the purchase of 50 billion m³ while the price linked to the average European price constituted \$375.5 per thousand m³ in the first quarter. The model of cooperation between Gazprom and Turkmenistan however

did not pass the test of the 2008–2009 crisis. Due to the 2009 decrease in the volume of gas purchased by Ukraine and a lower demand on it from other European consumers, re-export of Turkmen gas proved unprofitable for Gazprom.

In April 2009, an explosion took place on the Dovletabad – Darialyk gas pipeline, which is part of the Central Asia – Center gas main, caused, according to the Turkmen side, by a change of pressure in the pipe due to a sharp reduction in the amount of gas drawn by Gazprom. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan declared that Gazprom had acted without Ashgabat’s consent and accused the Russian side of the breach of contract. According to Gazprom’s representatives, they had informed Turkmenistan about the coming reduction in the purchase amount due to the decreasing demand from Ukraine.

The problem that seemed purely technical had exposed contradictions in the Russian-Turkmen cooperation. Analysts associated the situation with Gazprom’s attempt to force Turkmenistan abandon its idea of exporting gas by other than Russian pipelines. The Russian company refused to increase the purchase amount expecting that the Turkmen side would either cut the price on its gas or agree to reduce the volume of delivery. The demand and prices on gas in the EU countries dropped owing to the crisis. Under such circumstances, Gazprom’s profit from the re-export of Turkmen gas to Ukraine and the EU decreased, and the company attempted to reduce its losses. But Ashgabat stood firm and rejected all of its proposals. Then Gazprom excluded all expenses on the purchase of Turkmen gas from its 2009 budget. It was not until the end of 2009 that agreement was reached on resuming gas supply to Russia in 2010.

International Political Dimensions of Regional Drug Trafficking

The civil wars fought in Afghanistan did not permit it to conduct a well-designed reform of the country’s archaic economic system. Traditional agriculture in Afghan oases has

never produced high profits but it permitted to meet the population's requirements. The wars provoked Afghanistan's "local militarization" in the sense that field commanders who were actually in power in locales needed a permanent inflow of arms. To pay for them, tribal chiefs and field commanders needed funds they could not obtain in a normal way. In an attempt to get the required money, they started to encourage the production of drugs.

That was how narcoeconomy had taken shape in Afghanistan. Half of the country's population found themselves involved in it either directly (by growing and processing opium poppy) or indirectly (drug trafficking). By the early 2000s, about 75% of the world's heroine was produced from the opium poppy grown in Afghanistan.

The Taliban leadership censured drug trafficking formally as contradicting Islamic norms, though at first it had treated the expansion of opium poppy plantations favorably and even taxed that kind of activity. But in 2000 the Taliban prohibited to grow poppy, which somewhat reduced its output. After the overthrow of the Taliban, its production increased again.

According to the Tajik authorities, a network of heroine-producing laboratories is operating in Afghanistan near the Tajik border. More than half of the Afghan drugs are taken out of the country via Iran and Pakistan, and about half of them – via the Central Asian countries. Iran however takes violent measures against drug trafficking and use whereas the Central Asian countries do not. As a result, the bulk of drugs are trafficked via these countries. Almost half of the amount goes via Turkmenistan whose border with Afghanistan is still open. Drugs are also trafficked via the territories of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, mostly in the Khorog – Osh direction. From there, drugs go to Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Russia and the EU countries.

The Central Asian countries situated en route of drug trafficking faced the problems of increasing drug addiction, crime rate and corruption in their customs and border control agencies as well as law enforcement and governmental bodies.

According to the UN estimates, the number of drug addicts in Kazakhstan constituted 165,000–186,000 persons, in Taji-

kistan – 45,000 to 55,000 persons and in Uzbekistan 65,000 to 91,000 persons. In Turkmenistan, there are about 5,000 drug addicts. According to the mass media, about half of customs officers in the region are involved in drug trafficking to a varying extent. Check points on the border and along traffic arteries are an ineffective barrier to drugs.

The Afghan Government and the NATO troops in Afghanistan have actually taken no measures to fight drug production. The leaders of the countries which have brought their troops into Afghanistan have to admit their inability to root out drug production.

All Central Asian countries have acceded to the UN conventions on drugs, psychotropic substances and illegal drug trafficking. Besides that, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan signed a separate agreement in 1996. But actually, both multilateral and bilateral cooperation is developing with difficulty. Turkmenistan displays no interest in it whatsoever.

There is a coordinating committee within the CSTO on combating illegal drug trafficking. A series of “Canal” operations have been conducted since 2003 to identify and block drug trafficking routes. In June 2004, a corresponding agreement was concluded within the SCO framework.

A memorandum on cooperation in combating drug trafficking signed by Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan has been in effect within the United Nations framework since May 1996. A regional cooperation program has been approved on its basis. The United Nations has implemented a number of projects aimed at identifying the scale of opium poppy and cannabis cultivation in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

The law enforcement agencies of Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan are cooperating under the United Nations auspices. Attempts are being made to tighten security on the Turkmen-Afghan, Turkmen-Iranian and Tajik-Afghan borders.

The European Union has been implementing an antidrug program in the region since 2001 and a program of border control management assistance since 2003. The USA is assisting law enforcement agencies of the Central Asian countries to fight drug trafficking on a bilateral basis.

The main cause of unsuccessful struggle against drug trafficking is weak protection of the borders between Afghanistan and its neighbors. Only the Uzbek-Afghan border along the Amu-Darya River is relatively well-protected. However, drugs penetrate into Uzbekistan from Tajikistan. In an attempt to curb the illegal movement of people and freight across the country's state borders, the Uzbek authorities mined a number of areas on its border with Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan in the late 1990s. However Uzbekistan failed to block drugs penetration in this way while the neighboring countries were extremely annoyed by its measures.

The fully "transparent" Russian-Kazakhstani border is the main way of bringing drugs to Russia. According to the Ministry of Interior of the Russian Federation, 93% of marijuana, 85% of hashish and 78% of opium get into Russia via Kazakhstan.

Afghan drugs are brought into the territory of the Central Asian countries via Xinjiang as well. About 20% of heroine coming that way is produced on the Afghan territory. The XUAR rates second in China (after Yunnan Province) in the level of drug use. Drug dealing in the CA countries is closely connected with extremist organizations, primarily the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), which controlled up to 70% of the Central Asian drug trafficking in the late 1990s. Intrusion of the IMU units into Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan in 1999-2000 and the role drug dealing played in overthrowing the Government in Kyrgyzstan and arranging the riot in the Uzbek part of the Fergana Valley in 2005 showed that drug dealing has political ambitions. It is trying to control the Government or exert a substantial influence on it. Criminal communities involved in drug transportation and sale threaten internal security of the Central Asian countries and stability of the entire regional subsystem.

Drug dealing creates incentives for the smuggling of arms and radioactive materials, and illegal migration. According to expert estimates, 10 million units of firearms are in personal possession in Afghanistan. Residents of Tajikistan have kept a large number of arms since the civil war. There are no grounds to say yet that Central Asia has become a corridor for

a large-scale smuggling of arms. According to the IAEA, attempts at smuggling uranium, plutonium and thorium across the borders of the Central Asian states have been registered since the late 1990s.

Crisis of Afghanistan Democratization Project and Another Aggravation of the Situation in South Turkestan in the Late 2000s

By the start of 2009, it had become obvious that H. Karzai’s pro-American Government in Kabul did not enjoy popular support. In the summer of 2009, presidential elections were held in Afghanistan. The President was re-elected but the majority of Afghans recognized his victory illegitimate. The President lost political support in the country. His complete dependence on the USA and failure to act in order to improve people’s life caused disappointment among all strata of the population. The President did not enjoy authority among tribal chiefs, field commanders, the clergy and ordinary citizens. His authority did not go beyond the boundaries of the capital and the areas under the direct NATO control.

Talibs who had fled to Pakistan recovered from their 2001 defeat. Their popularity among the population rose again. Leaders of provinces treating H. Karzai with disdain began to form alliances with the Taliban. As a result, the latter resumed control of 70% of the Afghan territory.

There was no unity among the NATO countries that had sent troops to Afghanistan. Great Britain thought it possible to continue operations against the Taliban and agreed to increase its military contingent. In contrast to it, Germany who had deployed its forces in the area controlled by the Northern Alliance, which was the safest one, was doubtful of the prospects of a further war against the Taliban.

Of key importance was the course of the United States in respect of the Afghan issue. In January 2009, the Administration of President Barak Obama who represented the Democratic Party came into office. The new President intended to change the US policy in the Middle East and came out in favor

of a dialogue with Iran. But as to the Afghan policy, he was inclined to increase the pressure on the Taliban. In the course of 2009, the American military contingent in Afghanistan increased from 47,000 to 68,000 servicemen. In November 2009, B. Obama announced the dispatch of another 20,000 servicemen to Afghanistan and promised to start reducing their number as of July 2011.

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The 2000s were an important period for the Central Asian subsystem of international relations, during which it matured. The key role in its establishment was played by the smaller countries, which had successfully stood the trial of independence in the first decades of their existence. There was no large-scale war in the region and conflicts in its Southern areas did not spread to the territory of the neighboring states.

The great powers are rather discreet in building their relations with the small countries competing with one another but avoiding an aggravation of rivalry and the drawing of the smaller nations into it. Primary energy reserves and strategic spatial resources are the main factors arousing the interest of foreign states in the Central Asian countries.

The development of a suitable model for economic, social and political reforms aimed at ensuring local peoples' welfare and security remains a vital problem in the region. They have so far failed to achieve this objective on their own. Therefore it is highly important to find suitable forms and conditions of international cooperation permitting to combine the interests of more powerful and smaller countries.

Conclusion

For two decades since the breakup of the Soviet Union formation of a new international political subsystem has been going on in Central Asia. Formally, its boundaries are generally drawn along the state borders of the local countries. However, from the analytical point of view, large parts of China's and Afghanistan's territories are developing at a single international and political pace with them. This poses a lot of problems to the security and economic development of the CA states and the humanitarian interests of their residents.

By the start of the 2010s, the increasing role of the central areas of the Eurasian continent in high-level international politics has become evident. The active policy of the USA and a number of Washington's close NATO partners in the Middle East, the emergence of a "Western", i.e. orientated at Central Asia, line in China's policy, Pakistan's nuclear weapon factor and the increasing importance of the energy components in regional relations – all of these have become conducive to the establishment of a vast geopolitical region of the *Central-Eastern Asia*, with its heart in Central Asia proper¹⁵ and its periphery on the Pacific seaboard of the Far Eastern and South-East Asian countries.

The *ethno-political and military-strategic nexus "Afghanistan-Pakistan-Tajikistan-Uzbekistan"* features prominently in regional politics. Security problems bind these countries into a knot of conflicts whose parts cannot be untangled separately.

Mutually penetrating settlement of Tajiks and Uzbeks in adjacent areas of Uzbekistan and Tajikistan conduce to the interference of the former into the affairs of the latter. Complicated relations between the Government of Tajikistan and regional clans in that country with Tajik communities in

¹⁵ See Богатуров А.Д. Центральнo-Восточная Азия в современной международной политике [Bogaturov A.D. Central-Eastern Asia in Contemporary International Politics] // – Восток. 2005. № 1. Богатуров А.Д. Российский Дальний Восток в новых геопроостранственных измерениях Восточной Евразии. [Bogaturov A.D. Russian Far East in New Geopolitical Dimensions of Eastern Eurasia] // Мировая экономика и международные отношения, 2004, № 10. (электронные версии см.: <http://www.obraforum.ru>)

Afghanistan involved in the struggle for power in Kabul form a “single Tajik-Afghan political and military space”. Tajikistan’s security depends on the correlation of forces between Afghan Tajiks in the North and Pashto tribes in the South.

To a lesser degree, a similar interdependence exists between Afghanistan and Uzbekistan since communities of Afghan Uzbeks are connected with Uzbekistan and, like Afghan Tajiks, play a noticeable role in the correlation of internal Afghan forces.

Afghanistan is not an isolated player either. The problem of the “Greater Pashtonistan” binds it to Pakistan. Pakistani Pashtos are involved in Afghan affairs and display no loyalty towards the Government of Pakistan. Accordingly, Islamabad is not indifferent to the fight between Pashto, Tajik and Uzbek groups in Kabul. The Pakistani-Afghan-Tajik-Uzbek “nexus” turns out to be a geopolitical “hinge rail”, around which the plots of conflicts revolve in that part of the world.

An important incentive for the formation of the regional subsystem was intensification of the Western and the North-Western vectors in China’s foreign policy and national security protection. After the breakup of the USSR, the PRC’s security acquired another continental dimension inseparable from the security of the offshore insular China. The territory of the PRC is the fastening element in a single area of security stretching from the Pacific coast to Central Asia. The threat of Islamic extremism and drug trafficking as well as Beijing’s increasing interest in the energy resources of the smaller CA countries attached more significance to the Chinese policy stretching beyond the framework of a narrow regional policy orientated at neighboring, not very strong, countries. Chinese diplomacy has evolved a SCO-based cooperation development program.

An important aspect was added to the regional situation by the US military presence in the region starting with 2001. American bases emerged in the PRC’s “strategic rear”, which Chinese diplomacy strived to make an area free of American presence. The region had opened up to international competition like the Middle East, the South-East Asia or the Balkans. The US military and political interests in the Pacific part of Eurasia, its alliances with Japan and South Korea, and its “spe-

cial” relations with Taiwan linked Washington’s objectives with respect to China to US interests in Central Asia.

NATO is being “asiatized” owing to the emergence of its informal responsibility areas outside the Euro-Atlantic world. The alliance has acquired a Central Asian dimension manifested in the presence of the USA, Germany, Turkey and Great Britain in Afghanistan and the American military bases in Kyrgyzstan. Now Russia is not situated near the NATO’s extreme eastern edge but “overhangs” the alliance from the North because the area of *actual* responsibility of the latter has reached the borders of China and Pakistan and girds Russia from the Southwest and South.

The Russian Federation pays much attention to the issues of economic cooperation and security in East Eurasia. The East Siberian energy-bearing deposits are turning into the main reserve of Russia’s national development. The prospects of exporting Russian oil and gas to China and Japan look more probable now. In this respect, the Central Asian countries protect the “soft underbelly” of Russia’s Siberian regions, and this places them high within the system of interests of the economic and military security of the Russian Federation.

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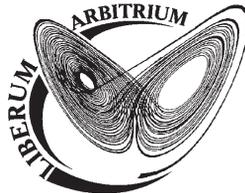
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